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C. H. SPURGEON'S
SERMONS ON CHRIST'S
NAMES AND TITLES

Selected and Edited by
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Consultant Editor: The Christian



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I

IMMANUEL

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”—Isaiah 7: 14, 15.

THE kingdom of Judah was in a condition of imminent peril. Two monarchs had leagued themselves against her, two nations had risen up for her destruction. Syria and Israel had come up against the walls of Jerusalem, with full intent to raze them to the ground, and utterly to destroy the monarchy of Judah. Ahaz the king, in great trouble, exerted all his ingenuity to defend the city; and amongst the other contrivances which his wisdom taught him, he thought it fit to cut off the waters of the upper pool, so that the besiegers might be in distress for want of water. He goes out in the morning, no doubt attended by his courtiers, makes his way to the conduit of the upper pool, intending to see after the stopping of the stream of water; but lo! he meets with something which sets aside his plans, and renders them needless. Isaiah steps forward, and tells him not to be afraid for the smoke of those two firebrands, for God should utterly destroy both the nations that had risen up against Judah. Ahaz need not fear the present invasion, for both himself and his kingdom should be saved. The king looked at Isaiah with an eye of incredulity, as much as to say, “If the Lord were to send chariots from heaven, could such a thing as this be? Should he animate the dust, and quicken every stone in Jerusalem to resist my foes, could this be done?”

The Lord, seeing the littleness of the king’s faith, tells him to ask a sign. “Ask it,” says he, “either in the depth, or in the height above. Let the sun go backward ten degrees, or let the moon stop in her midnight marches; let the stars move athwart the sky in grand procession; ask any sign you please

in the heaven above, or, if you wish, choose the earth beneath, let the depths give forth the sign, let some mighty waterspout lose its way across the pathless ocean, and travel through the air to Jerusalem's very gates; let the heavens shower a golden rain, instead of the watery fluid which usually they distil; ask that the fleece may be wet upon the dry floor, or dry in the midst of dew; whatsoever you please to request, the Lord will grant it you for the confirmation of your faith." Instead of accepting this offer with all gratitude, as Ahaz should have done, he, with a pretended humility, declares that he will not ask, neither will he tempt the Lord his God; whereupon Isaiah, waxing indignant, tells him that, since he will not in obedience to God's command ask a sign, behold, the Lord himself will give him one—not simply a sign, but *the* sign, the sign and wonder of the world, the mark of God's mightiest mystery and of his most consummate wisdom, for, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

It has been said that the passage I have taken for my text is one of the most difficult in all the Word of God. It may be so; I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it, and I rose up from reading them perfectly confused. One said one thing, and another denied what the other had said; and if there was anything that I liked, it was so self-evident that it had been copied from one to the other, and handed through the whole of them.

It does strike me that this Immanuel, who was to be born, could not be a mere simple man, and nothing else, for if you turn to the next chapter, at the eighth verse, you will find it said, "He shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." Here is a government ascribed to Immanuel which could not be his if we were to suppose that the Immanuel here spoken of was either Shear-Jashub, or Maher-shalal-hash-baz, or any other of the sons of Isaiah.

Many of the commentators divide the sixteenth verse from the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, and they read the fourteenth and fifteenth verses exclusively of Christ, and the sixteenth verse of Shear-Jashub, the son of Isaiah. They say that there were two signs, one was the conception by the virgin

of a son, who was to be called Immanuel, who is none other than Christ; but the second sign was Shear-Jashub, the prophet's son, of whom Isaiah said, "Before this child, whom I now lead before you—before this son of mine shall be able to know good and evil, so soon shall both nations that have now risen against you lose their kings." But I do not like that explanation, because it does seem to me to be pretty plain that the same child is spoken of in the one verse as in the others. "Before the child"—the same child, it does not say that child in one verse and then this child in another verse, but before the child, this one of whom I have spoken, the Immanuel, before he "shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

Another view, which is the most popular of all, is to refer the passage first of all to some child that was then to be born, and afterwards, in the highest sense, to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is the true sense of it, perhaps that is the best way of smoothing difficulties; but I do think that if I had never read those books at all, but had simply come to the Bible, without knowing what any man had written upon it, I should have said, "There is Christ here as plainly as possible; never could his name have been written more legibly than I see it here. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' It is an unheard-of thing, it is a miraculous thing, and therefore it must be a God-like thing. She 'shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good'; and before that child, the Prince Immanuel, shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings, and Judah shall smile upon their ruined palaces."

Let us commence with THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son."

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass," said the shepherds. "Let us follow the star in the sky," said the Eastern Magi. Let us go and stand by the manger to behold the commencement of the incarnation of Jesus. Let us recall the time when God first enveloped himself in mortal form, and tabernacled amongst the sons of men. Let us not blush to go to so humble a spot, let us stand

by that village inn, and let us see Jesus Christ, the God-man, become an infant of a span long.

And, first, we see here, in speaking of this birth of Christ, *a miraculous conception*. The text says expressly, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." This expression is unparalleled even in Sacred Writ; of no other woman could it be said beside the Virgin Mary, and of no other man could it be written that his mother was a virgin. The Greek word and the Hebrew are both very expressive of the true and real virginity of the mother, to show us that Jesus Christ was born of woman, and not of man. We shall not enlarge upon the thought, but still it is an important one, and ought not to be passed over without mentioning. Just as the woman, by her venturous spirit, stepped first into transgression—lest she should be despised and trampled on, God in his wisdom devised that the woman, and the woman alone, should be the author of the body of the God-man who should redeem mankind. Albeit that she herself first tasted the accursed fruit, and tempted her husband (it may be that Adam out of love to her tasted that fruit), lest she should be degraded, lest she should not stand on an equality with him, God hath ordained that so it should be, that his Son should be sent forth "born of a woman," and the first promise was that the seed of the woman, not the seed of the man, should bruise the serpent's head.

Moreover, there was a peculiar wisdom ordaining that Jesus Christ should be the son of the woman, and not of the man, because, had he been born of the flesh, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and merely flesh, and he would naturally, by carnal generation, have inherited all the frailties and the sins and the infirmities which man hath from his birth; he would have been conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, even as the rest of us. Therefore he was not born of man; but the Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin Mary, and Christ stands as the one man, save one other, who came forth pure from his Maker's hands, who could ever say, "I am pure." Aye, and he could say far more than that other Adam could say concerning his purity, for he maintained his integrity, and never let it go, and from his birth down to his death he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Oh, marvellous sight! Let us stand and look at it. A child of a virgin, what a mixture!

There is the finite and the infinite, there is the mortal and the immortal, corruption and incorruption, the manhood and the Godhead, time married to eternity, God linked with a creature, the infinity of the august Maker come to tabernacle on this speck of earth, the vast unbounded One, whom earth could not hold, and the heavens cannot contain, lying in his mother's arms, he who fastened the pillars of the universe, and riveted the nails of creation, hanging on a mortal breast, depending on a creature for nourishment. Oh, marvellous birth! Oh, miraculous conception! We stand and gaze and admire. Verily, angels may wish to look into a subject too dark for us to speak of; there we leave it, a virgin hath conceived, and borne a son.

In this birth, moreover, having noticed the miraculous conception, we must notice, next, *the humble parentage*. It does not say, "A princess shall conceive, and bear a son," but a virgin. Her virginity was her highest honour, she had no other. True, she was of royal lineage, she could reckon David amongst her forefathers, and Solomon amongst those who stood in the tree of her genealogy. She was a woman not to be despised, albeit that I speak of humble parentage, for she was of the blood-royal of Judah. O babe, in thy veins there runs the blood of kings; the blood of an ancient monarchy findeth its way from thy heart, all through the courses of thy body! Thou wast born, not of mean parents, if we look at their ancient ancestry, for thou art the son of him who ruled the mightiest monarchy in his day, even Solomon, and thou art the descendant of one who devised in his heart to build a temple for the mighty God of Jacob.

Nor was Christ's mother, in point of intellect, an inferior woman. I take it that she had great strength of mind, otherwise she could not have composed so sweet a piece of poetry as that which is called the Virgin's Song, beginning, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." She is not a person to be despised. I would this morning especially utter my thoughts on one thing which I consider to be a fault among us Protestants. Because Roman Catholics pay too much respect to the Virgin Mary, and offer prayer to her, we are too apt to speak of her in a slighting manner. She ought not to be placed under the ban of contempt, for she could truly sing, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." I suppose Protestant

generations are amongst the "all generations" who ought to call her blessed.

Though she was not a princess, yet her name, Mary, by interpretation, signifies a princess; and though she is not the queen of heaven, yet she has a right to be reckoned amongst the queens of earth; and though she is not the lady of our Lord, she does walk amongst the renowned and mighty women of Scripture.

Yet Jesus Christ's birth was a humble one. Strange that the Lord of glory was not born in a palace! Princes, Christ owes you nothing! Princes, Christ is not your debtor; ye did not swaddle him, he was not wrapped in purple, ye had not prepared a golden cradle for him to be rocked in! Queens, ye did not dandle him upon your knees, he hung not at your breasts! And ye mighty cities, which then were great and famous, your marble halls were not blessed with his little footsteps! He came out of a village, poor and despised, even Bethlehem; when there, he was not born in the governor's house, nor in the mansion of the chief man, but in a manger. Tradition tells us that his manger was cut in the solid rock; there was he laid, and the oxen likely enough came to feed from the self-same manger, the hay and the fodder of which was his only bed. Oh! wondrous stoop of condescension, that our blessed Jesus should be girded with humility, and stoop so low! Ah! if he stooped, why should he bend to such a lowly birth? And if he bowed, why should he submit not simply to become the son of poor parents, but to be born in so miserable a place?

If he was born in poverty, may not the poor in spirit expect that he will be their Friend? If he thus endured degradation at the first, will he count it any dishonour to come to the very poorest and humblest of his creatures, and tabernacle in the souls of his children?

We must make one more remark upon this birth of Christ before we pass away from it, and that remark shall be concerning a *glorious birthday*. With all the humility that surrounded the birth of Christ, there was yet very much that was glorious, very much that was honourable. No other man ever had such a birthday as Jesus Christ had. Of whom had prophets and seers ever written as they wrote of him? Whose name is graven on so many tablets as his? Who had such a

scroll of prophecy, all pointing to him as Jesus Christ, the God-man? Then recollect, concerning his birth, when did God ever hang a fresh lamp in the sky to announce the birth of a Caesar? Caesars may come, and they may die, but stars shall never prophesy their birth. When did angels ever stoop from heaven, and sing choral symphonies on the birth of a mighty man? Nay, all others are passed by; but see, in heaven there is a great light shining, and a song is heard, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Christ's birth is not despicable, even if we consider the visitors who came around his cradle. Shepherds came first, and, as it has been quaintly remarked by an old divine, the shepherds did not lose their way, and the wise men did. Shepherds came first, unguided and unled, to Bethlehem; the wise men, directed by the star, came next. The representative men of the two bodies of mankind, the rich and the poor, knelt around the manger; and gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and all manner of precious gifts, were offered to the child, who was the Prince of the kings of the earth, who, in ancient times, was ordained to sit upon the throne of his father David, and in the wondrous future to rule all nations with his rod of iron.

The second thing that we have to speak of is, THE FOOD OF CHRIST: "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Our translators were certainly very good scholars, and God gave them much wisdom, so that they craned up our language to the majesty of the original, but here they were guilty of very great inconsistency. I do not see how butter and honey can make a child choose good, and refuse evil. If it is so, I am sure butter and honey ought to go up greatly in price, for good men are very much required. But it does not say, in the original, "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," but, "Butter and honey shall he eat, till he shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good," or, better still, "Butter and honey shall he eat, when he shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

We shall take that translation, and just try to elucidate the meaning couched in the words. They should teach us, first of all, *Christ's proper humanity*. When he would convince his

disciples that he was flesh, and not spirit, he took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and ate as others did. "Handle me," he said, "and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Some heretics taught, even a little after the death of Christ, that his body was a mere shadow, that he was not an actual real man; but here we are told he ate butter and honey just as other men did. While other men were nourished with food, so was Jesus; he was very man as certainly as he was verily and eternally God. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Therefore we are told that he ate butter and honey, to teach us that it was actually a real man, who afterwards on Calvary died.

The butter and honey teach us, again, that Christ was to be *born in times of peace*. Such products are not to be found in Judaea in times of strife; the ravages of war sweep away all the fair fruits of industry, the unwatered pastures yield no grass, and therefore there could be no butter. The bees may make their hive in the lion's carcase, and there may be honey there; but when the land is disturbed, who shall go to gather the sweetness? How shall the babe eat butter when its mother flees away, even in the winter time, with the child clinging to her breast? In times of war, we have no choice of food; then men eat whatever they can procure, and the supply is often very scanty. Let us thank God that we live in the land of peace, and let us see a mystery in this text, that Christ was born in times of peace. The temple of Janus was shut ere the temple of heaven was opened. Ere the king of peace came to the temple of Jerusalem, the horrid mouth of war was stopped. Mars had sheathed his sword, and all was still. Augustus Caesar was emperor of the world, none other ruled it, and therefore wars had ceased, the earth was still, the leaves quivered not upon the trees of the field, the ocean of strife was undisturbed by a ripple, the hot winds of war blew not upon man to trouble him, all was peaceful and quiet; and then came the Prince of peace, who in after days shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire.

Perhaps it may seem somewhat playful; but, ere I close speaking upon this part of the subject, I must say how sweet

it is to my soul to believe that, as Christ lived upon butter and honey, surely *butter and honey drop from his lips*. Sweet are his words unto our souls, more to be desired than honey or the honeycomb.

Thy words, O Christ, are like honey! I, like a bee, have flown from flower to flower to gather sweets, and concoct some precious essence that shall be fragrant to me; but I have found honey drop from thy lips, I have touched thy mouth with my finger, and put the honey to my lips, and mine eyes have been enlightened, sweet Jesus; every word of thine is precious to my soul; no honey can with thee compare, well didst thou eat butter and honey!

And perhaps I ought to say that the effect of Christ's eating butter and honey was to show us that *he would not in his lifetime differ from other men* in his outward guise. Other prophets, when they came, were dressed in rough garments, and were austere and solemn in manner. Christ came not so; he came to be a man amongst men, a feaster with those that feast, an eater of honey with eaters of honey. He differed from none, and hence he was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. Why did Christ do so? Why did he so commit himself, as men said, though it was verily a slander? It was because he would have his disciples not regard meats and drinks, but despise these things, and live as others do; because he would teach them that it is not that which goeth into a man, but that which cometh out, that defileth him. It is not what a man eats, with temperance, that does him injury, it is what a man says and thinks; it is not abstaining from meat, it is not the carnal ordinance of "Touch not, taste not, handle not," that makes the fundamentals of our religion albeit it may be good addenda thereunto. Butter and honey Christ ate, and butter and honey may his people eat; nay, whatsoever God in his providence gives unto them, that is to be the food of the child Christ.

Now we come to THE NAME OF CHRIST: "And shall call his name Immanuel."

Mothers in the olden time called their children by names which had meaning in them; they did not give them the names of eminent persons, whom they would very likely grow up to hate, and wish they had never heard of. They had names full of meaning, which recorded some circumstance of their birth.

There was Cain: "I have gotten a man from the Lord," said his mother; and she called him Cain, that is "Gotten," or "Acquired." There was Seth—that is, "Appointed," for his mother said, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel." Noah means "Rest," or "Comfort." Ishmael was so called by his mother because God had heard her. Isaac was called "Laughter" because he brought laughter to Abraham's home. Jacob was called the supplanter, or the crafty one, because he would supplant his brother. We might point out many similar instances; perhaps this custom was a good one amongst the Hebrews, though the peculiar formation of our language might not allow us to do the same, except in a certain measure.

We see, therefore, that the Virgin Mary called her son Immanuel, that there might be *a meaning in his name*, "God with us." My soul, ring these words again, "God with us." Oh! it is one of the bells of heaven, let us strike it yet again: "God with us." Oh! it is a stray note from the sonnets of paradise: "God with us." Oh! it is the lisping of a seraph: "God with us." Oh! it is one of the notes of the singing of Jehovah, when he rejoices over his Church with singing: "God with us." This is his name, "God with us,"—God with us, by his incarnation, for the august Creator of the world did walk upon this globe; he who made ten thousand orbs, each of them more mighty and more vast than this earth, became the inhabitant of this tiny atom. He, who was from everlasting to everlasting, came to this world of time, and stood upon the narrow neck of land betwixt the two unbounded seas.

"God with us": he has not lost that name, Jesus had that name on earth, and he has it now in heaven. He is now "God with us." Believer, he is God with thee, to protect thee; thou art not alone, because the Saviour is with thee. Put me in the desert, where vegetation grows not; I can still say, "God with us." Put me on the wild ocean, and let my ship dance madly on the waves; I would still say, "Immanuel, God with us." Mount me on the sunbeam, and let me fly beyond the western sea; still I would say, "God with us." Let my body dive down into the depths of the ocean, and let me hide in its covers; still I could, as a child of God, say, "God with us." Aye, and in the grave, sleeping there in corruption, still I can see

the footmarks of Jesus; he trod the path of all his people, and still his name is "God with us."

But would you know this name most sweetly, you must *know it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. Has God been with us this morning? What is the use of coming to chapel, if God is not there? We might as well be at home if we have no visits of Jesus Christ, and certainly we may come, and come, and come, as regularly as that door turns on its hinges, unless it is "God with us" by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Unless the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ, and applies them to our heart, it is not "God with us." Otherwise, God is a consuming fire. It is "God with us" that I love.

*"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find."*

Now ask yourselves, do you know what "God with us" means? Has it been God with you in your tribulations, by the Holy Ghost's comforting influence? Has it been God with you in searching the Scriptures? Has the Holy Spirit shone upon the Word? Has it been God with you in conviction, bringing you to Sinai? Has it been God with you in comforting you, by bringing you again to Calvary? Do you know the full meaning of that name Immanuel, "God with us"? No; he who knows it best knows little of it. Alas, he who knows it not at all is ignorant indeed; so ignorant that his ignorance is not bliss, but will be his damnation.

"Immanuel." It is wisdom's mystery, "God with us." Sages look at it, and wonder; angels desire to see it; the plumb-line of reason cannot reach half-way into its depths; the eagling of science cannot fly so high, and the piercing eye of the vulture of research cannot see it. "God with us." It is hell's terror. Satan trembles at the sound of it; his legions fly apace, the black-winged dragon of the pit quails before it. Let him come to you suddenly, and do you but whisper that word, "God with us," back he falls, confounded and confused. Satan trembles when he hears that name, "God with us." It is the labourer's strength; how could he preach the Gospel, how could he bend his knees in prayer, how could the missionary go into foreign lands, how could the martyr stand at the stake,

how could the confessor own his Master, how could men labour if that one word were taken away? "God with us." 'Tis the sufferer's comfort, 'tis the balm of his woe, 'tis the alleviation of his misery, 'tis the sleep which God giveth to his beloved, 'tis their rest after exertion and toil. Ah! and to finish, "God with us"—'tis eternity's sonnet, 'tis heaven's hallelujah, 'tis the shout of the glorified, 'tis the song of the redeemed, 'tis the chorus of angels, 'tis the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky. "God with us."

II

SON OF MAN

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—
Matthew 20: 28.

THE mission of Christ to our world was distinct and definite. The ministry of the Gospel should be alike clear and transparent. It was but the other day I read a letter from the deacon of a church in which, speaking of his minister, he said, "We ought to understand geology thoroughly, for we usually hear something of it, at least, once every Sunday; there is one thing, however, we shall never be likely to understand under our present friend's ministry; the doctrine of the Atonement he seems utterly to ignore; I have not heard him allude to it for the past three months; nor do I know, for certain, whether he believes it or not. Though he sometimes alludes to Jesus Christ as an example, I have neither heard of Christ dying, nor Christ buried, of Christ risen, or Christ pleading in heaven at all. In fact, it seems to me I might as well attend a Socinian chapel."

Well, God forbid that such a reflection should ever be cast on me. Is it not my constant endeavour to bring you back, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the same old, old story of the Cross, and of the redemption by blood which was there and then wrought? This bell has but one note. It may be repeated, I sometimes fear, with too much monotony. Still, the tone is clear. I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is salvation in none other name under heaven. The propitiation which God has set forth for human sin is alone efficacious. There is no remission without blood. Full salvation is to be procured only through the wounds of Jesus slain. There is no salvation in heaven or earth beside. We are coming to that self-same story again. It never wearies the believer's ear; nor does it ever fail to be the power of God unto

salvation to every one that believeth. I want my text to speak. Let me, then, begin by expounding it word by word; and after that let me explain the doctrine to which it gives most distinct prominence.

First, THE PLAIN DECLARATION.

"The Son of man!" So doth our Lord Jesus Christ speak of himself. In relation to our fallen humanity, it sounds humble; but in the light of prophecy, it is full of dignity. "*The Son of man.*" This is none other than the true Messiah—the Son of God, infinite, eternal, co-equal with the Father, and yet he chooses to call himself full often "the Son of man," perhaps because as it was man that committed sin, it is man who must make an atonement for sin to the injured law of God. Man was the offender, man must suffer the penalty. As in one man the whole family died, in another man they must be made alive, if made alive at all. Jesus tells us that he is a man; thoroughly a man; one like to ourselves. The *Son* of man, a man among men, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; not wearing a fictitious manhood, but a real humanity like our own. This we must always bear in mind; for without it there could be no atonement at all.

Jesus is not merely a Son of man, but he is pre-eminently *the* Son of man foretold in the prophecy of Daniel, and predicted on the threshold of Paradise in the language of the first promise, "The seed of the women shall bruise the serpent's head." He is the Man, the second Adam in whom men are made alive. Being thus found in fashion as a man, and having taken upon himself the federal headship of man, he was qualified to become man's substitute and to make an atonement for human guilt. Dwell on this blessed truth; dwell upon it, those of you who are not saved; look wistfully at it for the encouragement it offers you. The Person in whom you are admonished to trust is not only God—or his unclouded glory might strike you with awe, and his terrors might justly make you afraid—but he is also man, and this ought to attract you to him, for he is akin to yourselves in nature and sympathy. Sin excepted, he is in no wise different from you. Oh! may you not well draw near to him without appalling dread, and with inspiring confidence,

since he calls himself the Son of man, and bids the sons of men come and put their trust under the shadow of his wings?

He "*came*"; that is the next word in our text. "The Son of man came." Strange the errand, and unique as the blessed Person who undertook it. Thus to come he stooped from the highest throne in glory down to the manger of Bethlehem; and on his part it was voluntary. We are, as it were, thrust upon the stage of action; it is not of our will that we have come to live on this earth. But Jesus had no need to have been born of the virgin. It was his own consent, his choice, his strong desire, that made him take upon himself our nature, of the seed of Abraham. He came voluntarily on an errand of mercy to the sons of men. Dwell upon this thought for a moment; let it sink into your mind; he who was King of kings and Lord of lords, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, voluntarily, cheerfully descended that he might dwell among the sons of men, share their sorrows, and bear their sins, and yield himself up a sacrifice for them, the innocent victim of their intolerable guilt.

If the angels burst out in song on that first Christmas night, if they made heaven and earth ring with their sweet harmonies, much more may we who have a share in the redemptive work of the incarnate God burst out into song as the news greets us that heaven descends to earth, that God comes down to man, that the Infinite becomes an infant, that the Eternal, who hath life in himself, deigns to dwell amongst the dying sons of men. Surely a way from earth to heaven will now be opened up, since there is a way from heaven to earth, so sacred, yet so simple. The same golden ladder that brings the blessed Visitant down to our humanity will take us up also to the divinity of God, to see him as our reconciled Father. "The Son of man came."

The next words are startling, for they reveal a singular intention, far different from the usual aim and end of messages and errands. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." Let me give you the exact translation. "Not to be served, but to serve." That is the nearest approach to a literal rendering I can supply. He came not to be served, but to serve. He had not a selfish thought in his soul. Though he had set his heart upon being the incarnate God, he had nothing

whatever to gain by it. Gain! What could the Infinite God gain? Splendour? Behold the stars; far away they glitter beyond all mortal count. Servants! does he want servants? Behold angels in their squadrons; twenty thousand, even thousands of angels are the chariots of the Almighty. Honour? Nay; the trump of fame for ever proclaims him King of kings and Lord of lords. Who can add to the splendour of that diadem that makes sun and moon grow pale by comparison? Who can add to the riches or the wealth of him who hath all things at his disposal? He comes, then, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. And you see him in the workshop serving his reputed parent. You see him in his home honouring his blessed mother with all filial obedience. You see him at the noontide of his wonderful career in the midst of his disciples, much more their servant than their Master; though he always maintained precedence by his own sovereign counsel, and by their weak apprehensions.

As he takes the basin, and the ewer, and the towel, and washes his disciples' feet, you can see the meekness of his disposition. And soon after this you see him giving up himself, his body, his soul, and his Spirit, in order that he might serve us. And what if I say that, even at this very moment, as the Son of man in heaven, he continues a kind of service of his people! For Zion's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest, but continues still to intercede for those whose names he bears upon his heart. Hear it, then, all ye people, and let every one that heareth hail the gracious fact. Be ye saints or sinners, be ye saved already, or athirst for the knowledge of salvation, the thought that Christ's errand was not to aggrandise himself, but to benefit us, must be welcome. He does not come to be served, but to serve. Does not this suit you, poor sinner—you who never did serve him, you who could not, as you are, minister to him? Well, he did not come to get your service; he came to give you his services; not that you might first do him honour, but that he might show you mercy. Oh! you need him so very much. And since he has come not to look for treasures, but to bestow unsearchable riches, not to find specimens of health, but instances of sickness upon which the healing art of his grace may operate, surely there is hope for you.

Methinks were I just now seeking Christ, and sorely cast down in spirit, it would make my heart beat for joy to think that Jesus came to serve, and not to be served. Peradventure I would say, he knows my case, and he has come to serve me, poor me. Do I not want washing? Why should he not wash me? The dying thief rejoiced to see in his day the fountain which Jesus had opened; why should not I see it too, and have a washing from that precious One who comes to serve the vilest and the meanest of the sons of men? Behold! Behold and wonder! Behold and love! Behold and trust! Jesus comes from the right hand of God to the manger, to the cross, to the sepulchre, not to be served, but that he might serve the sons of men.

Pass on to the next words, "*And to give his life,*" or, more correctly, "and to give his soul." We have no lives to give. Our lives are forfeited; they are due to divine justice. Christ had a life of his own, which was by no means due to God on account of any obligations. He had not sinned, but he gave his life. The death of Christ was perfectly voluntary. As he was free to come, or not, so he was not under any constraint to give his life, but he did so, and that of his own accord. The grand object of his coming to this earth was to give his life. Read the text again. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world merely to be an example, or merely to reveal the Godhead to the sons of men. He came to make a substitutionary sacrifice. He came to give his soul as a ransom. If you do not believe this doctrine, you do not believe Christianity. The very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of the mission of Jesus Christ is his coming to give his life that he might stand in the place of those for whom he died. He came on purpose to give his life. Now to give the soul is something more than to give the life. He died, 'tis true; yet he did more than die; he died by an outpouring of all his life-floods, by the endurance of an anguish such as no ordinary mortal could ever have borne.

Of old 'twas the blood that made atonement. The animal was presented in sacrifice, but the animal was no sacrifice till it was slain, and then when the purple stream smoked down the altar's side, and the bowels of it were cast upon the altar,

then it was that the sacrifice was truly presented. Jesus Christ gave up the very essence of his humanity to be a substitutionary sacrifice for us. His spirit was tortured with pangs that are past conception, much more past description. He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He was like a splendid cluster put into the wine-press, and the feet of eternal vengeance trod upon him till the sacred wine of his atoning blood streamed forth to save the sons of men. He gave his very self, his entire self, his soul, his life, his essential being, to be a ransom for the sons of Adam. Oh! that I could turn your eyes to that great sight! Behold how he gave his life! Would to God that for a moment your thoughts were fixed on those five streaming wounds, those sacred founts of life, and health, of pardon and peace, to dying souls! Oh! that your eyes could but gaze within the wounds, into that heart boiling like a cauldron with the wrath of God, tossed to and fro, heaving within itself, oppressed, burdened, tormented, and filled with very anguish. Oh! that you could see it; oh! that you could understand that he came from heaven to suffer all this, to give himself up thus, that he might be, instead of us, the victim of a vengeance we deserved; that his griefs might avert our ruin, that his pangs might rescue us from destruction. He drank the cup of condemnation dry; not a dreg was left; and, in so doing, he poured out his soul unto death.

Moreover, his death is our ransom. So it is written, he came to give his life "*a ransom*." No one here, I suppose, needs to have explained to him what a ransom means. It may be fairly illustrated by the old Jewish ceremony of the redemption money. Every male person among the Jews belonged to God, and he must be redeemed. There was a settled price. The rich were not to give more; the poor should not give less. The same amount was fixed for all. The tithe drachma was paid by every Jew. Then he was enrolled as one of the Lord's redeemed, of whom you so often read. Failing that, he would have been cut off from the congregation of Israel. That piece of money stood instead of the man—it was his ransom. He was not to die—he was to live as a redeemed person.

That is just what Jesus has done for his people. He has put himself, his soul, his life devoted, his death accomplished, before God in the stead of our soul, of our death, of us; and every

man who has Christ to be his substitute is a redeemed man; he is one of the Lord's ransomed people, and shall go to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon his head. But every man who has not accepted Christ remains an unredeemed man, under the curse, and subject to the divine wrath, under the slavery of Satan, and awaiting the sentence of an utter destruction. Jesus Christ came to give his life a ransom. As a slave is redeemed by the payment of a price, so Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law under which we were by nature, having himself come under the law. He redeems us from the death which was due to us by himself enduring a death which was a full equivalent in the estimation of God.

Our text says "*for many*." We might with greater force and stricter accuracy translate it, "He gave his life a ransom in the room of many." The word "for" there has a substitutionary meaning, "He gave his life instead of many." Indeed, this is the point of the sentence—One stood for many. Jesus suffered for many; he put himself into the place of many. Mark the word "many." With this we finish the exposition. He does not say "all." There are passages which speak of all. They have their meaning. None of them, however, refer to the substitutionary work of Christ. Jesus Christ did not give his life a ransom in the stead of all mankind, but a ransom in the stead of many men. Who are those many men? Bless God, they are many; for they are not a few. But who are they? God knows. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." You may ascertain as much as you need to know by answering a plain question. Dost thou trust Jesus Christ with thine eternal destinies? Dost thou come, all guilty as thou art, and rely upon his blood to take that guilt away? Dost thou confide in Jesus, and in him alone? If so, he died for thee, and in thy stead; and thou shalt never die.

This is thy comfort, that thou canst not die. How canst thou perish if Jesus was put into thy place? If thy debt was paid of old by Christ, can it ever be demanded of thee again? Once paid, it is fully discharged; the receipt we have gladly accepted; and now we can cry, with the Apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that hath risen again, who is even at the right hand

of God, who also maketh intercession for us." See here the mainstay of every believer's confidence. He knows that Christ died for him because he hath put his trust in his blessed mediation. If Jesus died for me, then I cannot be condemned for the sins which he expiated. God cannot punish twice for the one offence. He cannot demand two payments for one debt.

Second, SOME POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS.

The main drift of the text is the doctrine of a vicarious or substitutionary atonement whereby Christ's ransom sufficeth in the stead of many. On this let me give to each thought but a sentence or two. It would *seem that man is not delivered from the bondage of his sons without a price*. No one goes free by the naked mercy of God. Every captive exposed to God's vengeance must be redeemed before he is delivered, otherwise he must continue a captive. Broad as the statement may appear, I venture to assert by divine warrant that there never was beneath the cope of heaven a sin forgiven without satisfaction being rendered. No sin against God is pardoned without a propitiation. It is only forgiven through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It never can be remitted without the penalty having been exacted. The divine law knows of no exception or exemption. The statute is absolute, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Every soul that ever sinned, or ever shall sin, must die, die eternally, too, either in itself or in its substitute. The justice of the law must be vindicated. God waives none of the rights of justice in order to give liberty to mercy. Oh! my hearers, if you are trusting in the unconditional mercy of God, you are trusting in a myth. Has someone buoyed you up with the thought of the infinite goodness of God, I would remind you of his infinite holiness. Hath he not declared that he will by no means spare the guilty? No debt due to God is remitted unless it be paid. It must either be paid by the transgressor in the infinite miseries of hell, or else it must be paid for him by a substitute. There must be a price for the ransom, and evidently, according to the text, *that price* must be a soul, a life.

Christ did not give his body merely, nor his stainless character,

nor merely his labours and sufferings, but he gave his soul, his life, a ransom. Oh! sinner, Almighty God will never be satisfied with anything less than thy soul. Canst thou bear the piercing thought that thy soul shall be cast from his presence for ever? Wouldst thou escape the dire penalty, thou must find another soul to stand in thy soul's stead. Thy life is forfeited. The sentence is passed. Thou shalt die. Death is thy doom. Die thou must; for ever die unless thou canst find another life for a sacrifice in lieu of thy life. But know that this is just what Christ has found. He has put a soul, a life, into the place of our souls, our lives. How memorable that text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Why? Because "the blood is the life thereof." Until the blood flows, the soul is not divided from the body. The shedding of the blood indicated that the soul—the essence of the being—had been offered. Oh! blessed, for ever blessed be the crowned head of him who once did bear the cross! He hath offered for his people a soul, a life, a matchless soul, a life unparalleled. No more can justice require; vengeance is satisfied; the price is paid; the redeemed of the Lord are completely free!

The question has been asked, "If we be redeemed by the blood of Christ, who receives the ransom?" Some have talked as if Christ paid a price to the devil. A more absurd imagination could never have crossed human mind. We never belonged to the devil. Satan has no rights in us. Christ never acknowledged that he had any, and would never pay him anything. What then? Surely the ransom price was paid to the Great Judge of all. This is, of course, but a mystical way of speaking. A metaphor is employed to bring out the meaning. The fact is that God had sworn, and would not repent, that sin must be punished. In the very essence of things it was right that transgression should meet with its just recompense. There could be no moral government kept up, there could be no unimpeachable governor, unless conviction followed crime and retribution was exacted of the guilty. It was not right, nor could it have been righteous, on any ground, for sin to have been passed over without its having been punished, or for iniquity to have escaped without any infliction. But when Jesus Christ comes and puts his own sufferings into the place of our sufferings, the law is fully vindicated, while mercy is fitly displayed.

A man dies ; a soul is given ; a life is offered—the Just for the unjust. What if I say that, instead of justice being less satisfied with the death of Christ than with the deaths of the ten thousand thousands of sinners for whom he died, it is more satisfied and it is most highly honoured ! Had all the sinners that ever lived in the world been consigned to hell, they could not have discharged the claims of justice. They must still continue to endure the scourge of crime they could never expiate. But the Son of God, blending the infinite majesty of his Deity with the perfect capacity to suffer as a man, offered an atonement of such inestimable value that he has absolutely paid the entire debt for his people. Well may justice be content since it has received more from the Surety than it could have ever exacted from the assured.

Once more. *What is the result of this?* The result is that the man is redeemed. He is no longer a slave. Some preachers and professors affect to believe in a redemption which I must candidly confess I do not understand ; it is so indistinct and indefinite—a redemption which does not redeem anybody in particular, though it is alleged to redeem everybody in general ; a redemption insufficient to exempt thousands of unhappy souls from hell after they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus ; a redemption, indeed, which does not actually save anybody, because it is dependent for its efficacy upon the will of the creature ; a redemption that lacks intrinsic virtue and inherent power to redeem anybody, but is entirely dependent upon an extraneous contingency to render it effectual. With such theories I have no fellowship. That every soul for whom Christ shed his blood as a Substitute, he will claim as his own, and have as his right, I firmly hold. I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious truth. Not all the powers of earth or hell ; not the obstinacy of the human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind, can ever prevent Christ seeing of the travail of his soul and being satisfied. To the last jot and tittle of his reward shall he receive it at the Father's hand. A redemption that *does* redeem, a redemption that redeems many, seems to me infinitely better than a redemption that does not actually redeem anybody, but is supposed to have some imaginary influence upon all the sons of men.

Our last question I must leave with yourselves to answer.

Did Jesus Christ redeem you? Ah! dear hearer, this is a serious matter. Art thou a redeemed soul or not? It is not possible for thee to turn over the books of destiny and read between the folded leaves. Neither needest thou wish to do so. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is to be preached to every creature under heaven, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"; therefore, everyone that believeth and is baptised, being saved, must have been redeemed, for he could not have been saved otherwise. If thou believest and art baptized, thou art redeemed, thou art saved. Now for thine answer to the question—Dost thou believe? "I believe," says one, and he begins to repeat what they call the "Apostle's Creed." Hold your tongue, sir! That matters not; the devil believes that, perhaps more intelligently than you do; he believes and trembles. That kind of believing saves no man. You may believe that most orthodox creed in Christendom, and perish. Dost thou trust—for that is the cream of the word "*believe*"—dost thou trust in Jesus? Dost thou lean thy whole weight on him? Hast thou that faith which the Puritans used to call "recumbency" or "leaning"? That is the faith that saves—faith that falls back into the arms of Jesus, a faith that drops from its own hanging-place into those mighty arms, and rests upon the tender breast of the Lord Jesus the Crucified. Oh! my soul, make sure that thou dost trust him, for thou hast made sure of everything else when thou hast made sure of that. Has God the Holy Spirit taught you, my dear hearer, that you cannot safely rely on your own good works? Has he weaned you from resting upon mere ceremonies? Has he brought you to look to the cross—to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone? If so, Christ redeemed you; you can never be a slave again. Has he redeemed you, the liberty of the believer is yours now, and after death the glory of Christ shall be your portion too. Remember the words of the dying monk when, putting aside the extreme unction and all the paraphernalia of his Church, he lifted up his eyes and said, "*Tua vi' nera. Jesu! tua vulnera Jesu!*" "Thy wounds, oh, Jesu, thy wounds, oh, Jesu!" This must be your refuge, poor broken-winged dove. Fly thither into the clefts of the rock, into the spear-thrust in the Saviour's heart. Fly there. Rest on him; rest on him; rest with all your weight of sin, with all your blackness and your foulness, with all your doubts and your despairs,

rest on him. Jesus wants to receive you ; fly to him—fly away to him now—

*“Come, guilty souls, and fly away,
And look to Jesus' wounds;
This is the accepted gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds.
God loved his Church, and gave his Son
To drink the cup of wrath;
And Jesus says he'll cast out none
Who come to him in faith.”*

III

A MAN OF SORROWS

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—Isaiah 53: 3.

POSSIBLY a murmur will pass round the congregation, "This is a dreary subject and a mournful theme." But, O beloved, it is not so, for great as were the woes of our Redeemer, they are all over now, and are to be looked back upon with sacred triumph. However severe the struggle, the victory has been won; the labouring vessel was severely tossed by the waves, but she has now entered into the desired haven. Our Saviour is no longer in Gethsemane agonising, or upon the cross expiring; the crown of thorns has been replaced by many crowns of sovereignty; the nails and the spear have given way to the sceptre. Nor is this all, for though the suffering is ended, the blessed results never end.

Let it never be forgotten that the subject of the sorrows of the Saviour has proved to be more efficacious for comfort to mourners than any other theme in the compass of revelation, or out of it. Even the glories of Christ afford no such consolation to afflicted spirits as the sufferings of Christ. Christ is in all attitudes the consolation of Israel, but he is most so as a man of sorrows. Troubled spirits turn not so much to Bethlehem as to Calvary; they prefer Gethsemane to Nazareth. The afflicted do not so much look for comfort to Christ as he will come a second time in splendour of state, as to Christ as he came the first time, a weary man and full of woes. The passion-flower yields us the best perfume, the tree of the cross bleeds the most healing balm. Like in this case cures like, for there is no remedy for sorrow beneath the sun like the sorrows of Immanuel. Let us go, then, without reluctance to the house of mourning, and commune with "The Chief Mourner," who above all others could say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction."

We will not stray from our text this morning, but keep to it so closely as even to dwell upon each one of its words. The words shall give us our divisions:—"A man"; "*a man of sorrows*"; "*acquainted with grief*."

First, "A MAN." There is no novelty to anyone here present in the doctrine of the real and actual manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but, although there be nothing novel in it, there is everything important in it, therefore, let us hear it again. This is one of those Gospel church-bells which must be rung every Sabbath-day: this is one of those provisions of the Lord's household, which, like bread and salt, should be put upon the table at every spiritual meal. We can never meditate too much upon Christ's blessed person as God and as man. Let us reflect that he who is here called a man was certainly "very God of very God"; "a man," and "a man of sorrows," and yet at the same time, "God over all, blessed for ever." He who was "despised and rejected of men" was beloved and adored by angels, and he from whom men hid their faces in contempt, was worshipped by cherubim and seraphim. This is the great mystery of godliness, God was "manifest in the flesh." He who was God, and was in the beginning with God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The Highest stooped to become the lowest, the Greatest took his place among the least. Strange, and needing all our faith to grasp it, yet is it true that he who sat upon the well of Sychar, and said "Give me to drink," was none other than he who digged the channels of the ocean, and poured into them the floods. Son of Mary, thou art also Son of Jehovah! Man of the substance of thy mother, thou art also essential Deity; we worship thee this day in spirit and in truth!

Remembering that Jesus Christ is God, it now behoves us to recollect that his manhood was none the less real and substantial. It differed from our own humanity in the absence of sin, but it differed in no other respect. It is idle to speculate upon a heavenly manhood, as some have done, who have, by their very attempt at accuracy, been borne down by whirlpools of error. It is enough for us to know that the Lord was born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling bands, laid in a manger, and needed to be nursed by his mother as any other little child; he grew in stature like any other human being, and as a man we know that he ate and drank, that he hungered and

thirsted, rejoiced and sorrowed. His body could be touched and handled, wounded and made to bleed. He was no phantasm, but a man of flesh and blood, even as ourselves; a man needing sleep, requiring food, and subject to pain, and a man who, in the end, yielded up his life to death. There may have been some distinction between his body and ours, for inasmuch as it was never defiled by sin, it was not capable of corruption; otherwise in body and in soul, the Lord Jesus was perfect man after the order of our manhood, "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," and we must think of him under that aspect.

Our temptation is to regard the Lord's humanity as something quite different from our own; we are apt to spiritualise it away, and not to think of him as really bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. All this is akin to grievous error; we may fancy that we are honouring Christ by such conceptions, but Christ is never honoured by that which is not true. He was a man, a real man, a man of our race, the Son of Man; indeed a representative man, the second Adam: "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Now this condescending participation in our nature brings the Lord Jesus very near to us in relationship. Inasmuch as he was man, though also God, he was, according to Hebrew law, our *goel*—our kinsman, next of kin. Now it was according to the law that if an inheritance had been lost, it was the right of the next of kin to redeem it. Our Lord Jesus exercised his legal right, and seeing us sold into bondage and our inheritance taken from us, came forward to redeem both us and all our lost estate. A blessed thing it was for us that we had such a kinsman. When Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz, it was the most gracious circumstance in her life that Boaz turned out to be her next of kin; and we who have gleaned in the fields of mercy praise the Lord that his only begotten Son is the next of kin to us, our brother, born for adversity.

It would not have been consistent with divine justice for any other substitution to have been accepted for us, except that of a man. Man sinned, and man must make reparation for the injury done to the divine honour. The breach of the law

was caused by man, and by man must it be repaired ; man had transgressed, man must be punished. It was not in the power of an angel to have said, "I will suffer for man"—for angelic sufferings would have made no amends for human sins. But the man, the matchless man, being the representative man, and of right by kinship allowed to redeem, stepped in, suffered what was due, made amends to injured justice, and thereby set us free!

And now, since the Lord thus saw in Christ's manhood a suitableness to become our Redeemer, I trust that many here who have been under bondage to Satan will see in that same human nature an attraction leading them to approach him. Sinner, thou hast not to come to an absolute God, thou art not bidden to draw nigh to the consuming fire. Thou mightest well tremble to approach him whom thou hast so grievously offended ; but, there is a man ordained to mediate between thee and God, and if thou wouldst come to God, thou must come through him—the man Christ Jesus. God out of Christ is terrible out of his holy places, he will by no means spare the guilty—but look at yonder Son of man!

*"His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow;
No bolts to drive your guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."*

He is a man with hands full of blessing, eyes wet with tears of pity, lips overflowing with love, and a heart melting with tenderness. See ye not the gash in his side?—through that wound there is a high-way to his heart, and he who needs his compassion may soon excite it. O sinners! the way to the Saviour's heart is open, and penitent seekers shall never be denied. Why should the most despairing be afraid to approach the Saviour? He has deigned to assume the character of the Lamb of God—I never knew even a little child that was afraid of a lamb ; the most timorous will approach a lamb, and Jesus used this argument when he said to every labouring and heavy laden one, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." I know you feel yourselves sad and trembling, but need you tremble in *his* presence? If you

are weak, your weakness will touch his sympathy, and your mournful inability will be an argument with his abounding mercy. If I were sick and might have my choice where I would lie, with a view to healing, I would say, place me where the best and kindest physician upon earth can see me, put me where a man with great skill, and equal tenderness, will have me always beneath his eye: I shall not long groan there in vain—if he can heal me he will.

Sinner, place thyself by an act of faith this morning beneath the cross of Jesus; look up to him and say, "Blessed Physician, thou whose wounds for me can heal me, whose death for me can make me live, look down upon me! Thou art man, thou knowest what man suffers. Thou art man, wilt thou let a man sink down to hell who cries to thee for help? Thou art a man, and thou canst save, and wilt thou let a poor unworthy one who longs for mercy be driven into hopeless misery, while he cries to thee to let thy merits save him?" Sinner, fly to Jesus without fear; he waits to save, it is his office to receive sinners and reconcile them to God.

Then let me add, before I leave this point, that every child of God ought also to be comforted by the fact that our Redeemer is one of our own race, seeing that he was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest; and he was tempted in all points, like as we are, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted. The sympathy of Jesus is the next most precious thing to his sacrifice. I stood by the bedside of a Christian brother the other day, and he remarked, "I feel thankful to God that our Lord took our sicknesses." "Of course," said he, "the grand thing was, that he took our sins, but next to that, I, as a sufferer, feel grateful that he also took our sicknesses." Personally, I also bear witness that it has been to me, in seasons of great pain, superlatively comfortable to know that in every pang which racks his people the Lord Jesus has a fellow-feeling.

*"He knows what strong temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."*

How completely it takes the bitterness out of grief to know that it once was suffered by him. The Macedonian soldiers, it

is said, made long forced marches which seemed to be beyond the power of mortal endurance, but the reason for their untiring energy lay in Alexander's presence. He was accustomed to walk with them, and bear the like fatigue. If the king himself had been carried like a Persian monarch in a palanquin, in the midst of easy, luxurious state, the soldiers would soon have grown tired; but, when they looked upon the king of men himself, hungering when they hungered, thirsting when they thirsted, often putting aside the cup of water offered to him, and passing it to a fellow-soldier who looked more faint than himself, they could not dream of repining. Why, every Macedonian felt that he could endure any fatigue if Alexander could. This day, assuredly, we can bear poverty, slander, contempt, or bodily pain, or death itself, because Jesus Christ our Lord has borne it. By his humiliation it shall become pleasure to be abased for his sake, by the spittle that distilled adown his cheeks it shall become a fair thing to be made a mockery for him, by the buffeting and the blind-folding it shall become an honour to be disgraced, and by the cross it shall become life itself to surrender life for the sake of such a cause and so precious a Master! May the man of sorrows now appear to us, and enable us to bear our sorrows cheerfully.

We must pass on to dwell awhile upon the next words, "A MAN OF SORROWS." The expression is intended to be very emphatic, it is not "a sorrowful man," but "a man of sorrows," as if he were made up of sorrows, and they were constituent elements of his being. Some are men of pleasure, others men of wealth, but he was "a man of sorrows." He and sorrow might have changed names. He who saw him, saw sorrow, and he who would see sorrow, must look on him. "Behold, and see," saith he, "if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow which was done unto me."

Our Lord is called the man of sorrows for *peculiarity*, for this was his peculiar token and special mark. We might well call him "a man of holiness," for there was no fault in him; or a man of labours, for he did his Father's business earnestly; or "a man of eloquence," for never man spake like this man. We might right fittingly call him in the language of our hymn, "The man of love," for never was there greater love than glowed in his heart. Still conspicuous as all these and many

other excellencies were, yet had we gazed upon Christ and been asked afterwards what was the most striking peculiarity in him, we should have said his sorrows. The various parts of his character were so singularly harmonious that no one quality predominated, so as to become a leading feature. Deficiencies and exaggerations exist everywhere but in Jesus. He is the perfect man, a whole man, the holy one of Israel. But there was a peculiarity, and it lay in the fact that "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men," through the excessive griefs which continually passed over his spirit. Tears were his insignia, and the cross his escutcheon.

Is not the title of "man of sorrows" given to our Lord by way of *eminence*? He was not only sorrowful, but pre-eminent among the sorrowful. All men have a burden to bear, but his was heaviest of all. Who is there of our race that is quite free from sorrows? Search ye the whole earth through, and everywhere the thorn and thistle will be found, and these have wounded every one of woman born. High in the lofty places of the earth there is sorrow, for the royal widow weeps her lord: down in the cottage where we fancy that nothing but content can reign, a thousand bitter tears are shed over dire penury and cruel oppression. There is sorrow on the sea, and sadness on the land. But in this common lot, the "firstborn among many brethren" has more than a double portion, his cup is more bitter, his baptism more deep than the rest of the family.

The reasons for this superior sorrow may be found in the fact that with his sorrow there was no admixture of sin. Sin deserves sorrow, but it also blunts the edge of grief by rendering the soul untender and unsympathetic. We do not start at sin as Jesus did, we do not tremble at the sinner's doom as Jesus would. His was a perfect nature, which, because it knew no sin, was not in its element amid sorrow, but was like a land bird driven out to sea by the gale. To the robber the jail is his home, and the prison fare is the meat to which he is accustomed, but to an innocent man a prison is misery, and everything about it is strange and foreign. Our Lord's pure nature was peculiarly sensitive of any contact with sin; we, alas, by the fall, have lost much of that feeling. In proportion as we are sanctified,

sin becomes the source of wretchedness to us; Jesus being perfect, every sin pained him much more than it would any of us. I have no doubt there are many persons in the world who could live merrily in the haunts of vice—could hear blasphemy without horror, view lust without disgust, and look on robbery or murder without abhorrence; but to many of us, an hour's familiarity with such abominations would be the severest punishment. A sentence in which the name of Jesus is blasphemed is torture to us of the most exquisite kind. The very mention of the shameful deeds of vice seizes us with horror. To live with the wicked would be a sufficient hell to the righteous. David's prayer is full of agony wherein he cries, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." But the perfect Jesus, what a grief the sight of sin must have caused him! He could see sin where we cannot see it, and feel its heinousness as we cannot feel it: there was therefore more to grieve him, and he was more capable of being grieved.

Side by side with his painful sensitiveness of the evil of sin, was his gracious tenderness towards the sorrows of others. If we could know and enter into all the griefs of this congregation, it is probable that we should be of all men most miserable. There are heart-breaks in this house this morning, which, could they find a tongue, would fill our heart with agony. We hear of poverty here, we see disease there, we observe bereavement, and we mark distress, we note the fact that men are passing into the grave and, (ah, far more bitter grief,) descending into hell; but, somehow or other, either these become such common things, that they do not stir us, or else we gradually harden to them: the Saviour was always moved to sympathy with another's griefs, for his love was ever at flood-tide. All men's sorrows were his sorrows.

We recollect that besides this our Saviour had a peculiar relationship to sin. He was not merely afflicted with the sight of it, and saddened by perceiving its effects on others, but sin was actually laid upon him, and he was himself numbered with the transgressors; and therefore he was called to bear the terrible blows of divine justice, and suffered unknown, immeasurable agonies. His Godhead strengthened him to suffer, else mere manhood had failed. The wrath whose power no man knoweth, spent itself on him; "It pleased the Father to

bruise him, he hath put him to grief." Behold the man, and mark how vain it would be to seek his equal sorrow.

The title of "man of sorrows" was also given to our Lord to indicate the *constancy* of his afflictions. He changed his place of abode, but he always lodged with sorrow. Sorrow wove his swaddling bands, and sorrow spun his winding sheet. Born in a stable, sorrow received him, and only on the cross at his last breath did sorrow part with him. His disciples might forsake him, but his sorrows would not leave him. He was often alone without a man, but never alone without a grief. From the hour of his baptism in Jordan, to the time of his baptism in the pains of death, he always wore the sable robe and was "a man of sorrows."

Our Lord was a man of sorrows as to his poverty. Oh, you who are in want, your want is not so abject as his: he had not where to lay his head, but you have at least some humble roof to shelter you. No one denies you a cup of water, but he sat upon the well at Samaria, and said, "I thirst." We read more than once, that he hungered. His toil was so great that he was constantly weary, and we read of one occasion where they took him, "even as he was," into the ship—too faint was he to reach the boat himself, but they carried him as he was and laid him down near the helm to sleep; but he had not much time for slumber, for they woke him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish": a hard life was his, with nothing of earthly comfort to make that life endurable.

Remember ye who lament around the open grave, or weep in memory of graves but newly filled, our Saviour knew the heart-rendings of bereavement. Jesus wept, as he stood at the tomb of Lazarus.

Perhaps the bitterest of his sorrows were those which were connected with his gracious work. He came as the Messiah sent of God, on an embassy of love, and men rejected his claims. When he went to his own city, where he had been brought up, and announced himself, they would have cast him headlong from the brow of the hill. It is a hard thing to come on an errand of disinterested love, and then to meet with such ingratitude as this. Nor did they stay at cold rejection, they then proceeded to derision and to ridicule. There was no name of contempt which they did not pour upon him; nay, it was not

merely contempt, but they proceeded to falsehood, slander, and blasphemy. He was a drunken man, they said; hear this, ye angels, and be astonished! Yes, a wine-bibber did they call the blessed Prince of Life! They said he was in league with Beelzebub, and had a devil, and was mad; whereas he had come to destroy the works of the devil! They charged him with every crime which their malice could suggest. There was not a word he spoke but they would wrest it; not a doctrine but what they would misrepresent it: he could not speak but what they would find in his words some occasion against him. And all the while he was doing nothing but seeking their advantage in all ways. When he was earnest against their vices it was out of pity for their souls; if he condemned their sins it was because their sins would destroy them; but his zeal against sin was always tempered with love for the souls of men.

As he proceeded in his life his sorrows multiplied. He preached, and when men's hearts were hard, and they would not believe what he said, "he was grieved for the hardness of their heart." He went about doing good, and for his good works they took up stones again to stone him; alas, they stoned his heart when they could not injure his body. He pleaded with them, and plaintively declared his love, and received instead thereof a hatred remorseless and fiendish: slighted love has griefs of peculiar poignancy: many have died of hearts broken by ingratitude. Such love as the love of Jesus could not for the sake of those it loved bear to be slighted; it pined within itself because men did not know their own mercies and rejected their own salvation. His sorrow was not that men injured him, but that they destroyed themselves; this it was that pulled up the sluices of his soul, and made his eyes o'erflow with tears: "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." The lament is not for his own humiliation, but for their suicidal rejection of his grace.

But surely he found some solace with the few companions whom he had gathered around him. He did; but for all that he must have found as much sorrow as solace in their company. They were dull scholars, they learned slowly; what they did learn they forgot, what they remembered they did not practise,

and what they practised at one time they belied at another. They were miserable comforters for the man of sorrows. His was a lonely life, I mean that even when he was with his followers, he was alone. He said to them once, "Could ye not watch with me one hour," but indeed he might have said the same to them all the hours of their lives, for even if they sympathised with him to the utmost of their capacity, they could not enter into such griefs as his. A father in a house with many little children about him, cannot tell his babes his griefs; if he did they would not comprehend him. What know they of his anxious business transactions, or his crushing losses? Poor little things, their father does not wish they should be able to sympathise with him, he looks down upon them and rejoices that their toys will comfort them, and that their little prattle will not be broken in upon by his great griefs. The Saviour, from the very dignity of his nature, must suffer alone. The mountain-side with Christ upon it seems to me to be a suggestive symbol of his earthly life. His great soul lived in vast solitudes, sublime and terrible, and there amid a midnight of trouble, his spirit communed with the Father, no one being able to accompany him into the dark glens and gloomy ravines of his unique experience.

In the last, crowning sorrows of his life, there came upon him the penal inflictions from God, the chastisement of our peace which was upon him. He was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane by God's officers before the officers of the Jews had come near to him. There on the ground he knelt, and wrestled till the bloody sweat started from every pore, and his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." You have read the story of your Master's woes, and know how he was hurried from bar to bar; and treated with mingled scorn and cruelty before each judgment seat. When they had taken him to Herod and to Pilate, and almost murdered him with scourging, they brought him forth, and said, *Ecce homo*—"Behold the man." Their malice was not satisfied, they must go further yet, and nail him to his cross, and mock him while fever parched his mouth and made him feel as if his body were dissolved to dust. He cries out, "I thirst"; and is mocked with vinegar. Ye know the rest, but I would have you best remember that the sharpest scourging and severest griefs were all within; while the hand

of God bruised him, and the iron rod of justice broke him, as it were, upon the wheel.

He was fitly named a "man of sorrows!" I feel as if I had no utterance, as if my tongue were tied, while trying to speak upon this subject. I cannot find goodly words worthy of my theme, yet I know that embellishments of language would degrade rather than adorn the agonies of my Lord. There let the cross stand sublime in its simplicity! It needs no decoration. If I had wreaths of choicest flowers to hang about it, I would gladly place them there, and if instead of garlands of flowers, each flower could be a gem of priceless worth, I would consider that the cross deserved the whole. But as I have none of these I rejoice that the cross alone, in its naked simplicity, needs nought from mortal speech. Turn to your bleeding Saviour, O my hearers. Continue gazing upon him, and find in the "man of sorrows" your Lord and your God.

And now the last word is, he was "ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF." With grief he had an *intimate* acquaintance. He did not know merely what it was in others, but it came home to himself. We have read of grief, we have sympathised with grief, we have sometimes felt grief: but the Lord felt it more intensely than other men in his innermost soul; he, beyond us all, was conversant with this black letter lore. He knew the secret of the heart which refuseth to be comforted. By the waters of Marah he dwelt, and knew right well the bitter well.

It was a *continuous* acquaintance. He did not call at grief's house sometimes to take a tonic by the way, neither did he sip now and then of the wormwood and the gall, but the quassia cup was always in his hand, and ashes were always mingled with his bread. Not only forty days in the wilderness did Jesus fast; the world was ever a wilderness to him, and his life was one long Lent. I do not say that he was not, after all, a happy man, for down, deep in his soul, benevolence always supplied a living spring of joy to him. There was a joy into which we are one day to enter—the "joy of our Lord"—the "joy set before him" for which "he endured the cross, despising the shame"; but that does not at all take away from the fact that his acquaintance with grief was continuous and intimate beyond that of any man who ever lived. As there is a progress in the teaching of Christ and in the life of Christ, so is there also in the griefs

of Christ. The tempest lowered darker, and darker, and darker. His sun rose in a cloud, but it set in congregated horrors of heaped-up night, till, in a moment, the clouds were suddenly rent in sunder, and, as a loud voice proclaimed, "It is finished," a glorious morning dawned where all expected an eternal night.

Now, then, what shall I say in conclusion, but just this: let us admire the superlative love of Jesus. O love, love, what hast thou done! What has thou not done! Thou art omnipotent in suffering. Few of us can bear pain, perhaps, fewer still of us can bear misrepresentation, slander, and ingratitude. These are horrible hornets which sting as with fire: men have been driven to madness by cruel scandals which have distilled from venomous tongues. Christ, throughout life, bore these and other sufferings. Let us love him, as we think of how much he must have loved us. Will you try to get your souls saturated with the love of Christ? Admire the power of his love, and then pray that you may have a love somewhat akin to it in power. We sometimes wonder why the Church of God grows so slowly, but I do not wonder when I recollect what scant consecration to Christ there is in the Church of God. Jesus was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"; but many of his disciples who profess to be altogether his are living for themselves. There are rich men who call themselves saints, and are thought to be so, whose treasures are hoarded for themselves and families. There are men of ability who believe that they are bought with Christ's blood, yet their ability is all spent on other things and none upon their Lord. Mayhap, you have to confess you are doing nothing; do not let this day conclude till you have begun to do something for your Lord. We are always talking about the church doing this and that,—what is the church? The church is only the aggregation of individuals, and if any good is to be done it must be performed by individuals, and if all individuals are idle there is no church work done; there may be the semblance of it, but there is no real work done. Brother, sister, what art thou doing for Jesus? I charge thee by the nail-prints of his hands, labour for him! I charge thee by his wounded feet—run to his help! I charge thee by the scar in his side—give him thy heart! I charge thee by that sacred head, once pierced with thorns—yield him thy thoughts! I charge thee

by the shoulders which bore the scourges—bend thy whole strength to his service! I charge thee by himself, give him thyself. Live in his service, and die in service! Whilst thou livest let this be thy motto—"All for Jesus, all for Jesus; all for the man of sorrows, all for the man of sorrows!"

IV

THE LAMB OF GOD

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1: 29.

BEFORE we plunge into our main subject, it is needful to notice what is implied in our text, which is that “the world” was lost through sin, that all mankind had become guilty before God. Though you may never have broken the laws of your country, nor even the rules of propriety; though you may be both amiable and admirable in your general deportment, yet, for all this, as “there is none righteous, no, not one,” you also are included amongst the unrighteous. It matters not what religious professions you may have made, or what outward forms of godliness you may have observed, unless you have a better righteousness than your own, you are a lost sinner.

It is very likely that, if I had time to explain to you the fulness of your sin and the utter ruin of your natural state, you would grow angry. Yet you would have no cause to be angry, for all that I could say would fall far short of the truth about your real condition in the sight of God; and it is most solemnly important for you to know that, however high you may stand in the ranks of merely moral men, you are a lost soul, and a condemned soul, so long as you remain without living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are angry with the minister of the gospel who tells you this truth, you are as foolish as a certain Brahmin of whom I have heard. His religion consisted chiefly in not eating any animal food or destroying any kind of life. The missionary told him that it was impossible for him to carry out such a “religion” as that, “for,” said he, “in every drop of water that you drink, you swallow thousands of animals, and so destroy vast quantities of animal life.” Then he put a drop of water out of the cup from which the Brahmin had been drinking under his microscope, and so convinced him of the

truth of what he had said; and when the Brahmin saw the creatures moving in the water, instead of abandoning his false theory, he grew very angry, and dashed the microscope upon the ground. He was not angry, you see, with the fact, but with that which revealed the fact. The fault is not in the Gospel which we preach, so you should not be angry with it, or with us; the fault is in your own selves, in your own hearts and lives; and if you do not like to be told the truth about sin, it is a sure sign that your heart is not right in the sight of God.

With that truth taken for granted,—that you have sinned, and are therefore under God's condemnation unless you are trusting in Christ—we come directly to our text. It appears to me to be the whole Gospel in a very brief form. You may sometimes write much in a very few words, and here you have an epitome of the whole Gospel of God in these few syllables: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

First, then, WHAT IS TO BE BEHELD?

The text mentions *a Lamb*, by which is meant *a sacrifice*. Under the Jewish law, those who had offended brought sacrifices and offered them to God. These sacrifices were representations of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the Lamb of God." I will tell thee the Gospel in a few sentences. As God is just, it is inevitable that sin should be punished. If he would pardon thee, how can this be righteously accomplished? Only thus: Jesus Christ, his Son, came to earth and stood in the room, and place, and stead of all those who believe on him; and God accepted him as the substitutionary sacrifice for all those who put their trust in him. Under the Jewish law, the Lamb was put to death that the man might not be put to death; and, in like manner, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour suffered the pangs of death by crucifixion and the greater agony of the wrath of God that we might not suffer the pangs of hell and the wrath eternal which is due to sin. There is no other way of salvation under heaven but this. God cannot relax his justice, and he will by no means clear the guilty; but he laid upon Christ the full punishment that was due to sin, and smote him as though he had been the actual offender, and now, turning round to you, he tells you that, if you trust in Jesus, the merits of his great atoning sacrifice shall be imputed to you, and you shall live for ever in glory because Jesus died upon the cross of Calvary. If any of you would have your sins forgiven, and so

enjoy peace with God, you must look by faith to that sacrifice which was offered upon Calvary, and keep your eye of faith fixed there, and sooner or later you will certainly receive the blessings of peace into your souls.

But the text not only mentions a Lamb ; it says, "Behold *the Lamb of God*," and I draw your special attention to that expression. It is not merely *a* sacrifice to which you are to look, but *the* sacrifice that God has appointed and ordained to be the one and only sacrifice for sin. This is an all-important point. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . It pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief." If Christ had not been sent of God to be the Saviour of sinners, our faith would have had no firm foundation to rest upon ; but as God himself has set forth Christ to be the propitiation for human guilt, then he cannot reject the sinner who accepts that propitiation.

I need not raise any question as to whether Christ's atonement is sufficient, for God says that it is ; and as he is well satisfied with the sacrifice offered by his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, surely the most troubled conscience may be equally well satisfied with it. Your offence, my friend, was committed against God ; if, then, God is content with what Christ has done on your behalf, and so is willing to pardon you, surely you need not enquire any further, but with gratitude you should at once accept the reconciliation which Christ has made. It is "the Lamb of God" whom I have to bid you "behold". It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who dies on Calvary, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It was God who appointed him to die as the Substitute for sinners, it was God who accepted his sacrifice when he died.

Still further to bring out the full force of the text, notice the next words, "Behold the Lamb of God, *which taketh away the sin of the world*." When Jesus Christ was put into our place, our sin was laid upon him ; and sin, like anything else, cannot be in two places at one time. If, then, I, being a believer in Jesus, know that all my sin was laid upon Christ, it follows necessarily that I have no sin left upon me. It has become Christ's burden ; he has taken it away from me. "Yes," you say, "but then the sin is still on Christ." Ah ! but, my hearers, if our Lord Jesus Christ "his own self bare our sins in his own body up to the tree," he

there endured all the punishment that was due to us, or an equivalent for it, and those sins were by that means put away; that is to say, they ceased to be; so they do not exist any longer. All my indebtedness to God was transferred to Christ, and he paid all my debts. Then, where are my debts now? Why, there are none, they are all gone for ever. This is what Christ does for every one who truly trusts in him; he takes that man's sins, suffers what that man ought to have suffered, and puts that man's sins absolutely out of existence, so that they cease to be.

How gloriously he has put sin right away for all who believe in him! "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Of all sinners in the whole world who believe in Jesus Christ, it may be truly said that all their sins are gone past all recall; God has cast them behind his back into the depths of the Red Sea of the Saviour's blood, and they shall not be remembered against them any more for ever.

But *whose sin does he take away?* The text saith, "*the sin of the world.*" By this expression, I believe is intended the sin, not of the Jews only, but of Jews and Gentiles alike; the sin, not of a few sinners only, but of all sinners in the whole world who come to Jesus, and put their trust in him. He has so taken away "*the sin of the world*" that every sinner in the world who will come to him, and trust in him, shall have all his sins put away for ever. Whether he be Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, if he truly believes in Jesus, it is certain that Christ took all his sins away. Whether he was born eighteen hundred years ago, or whether he shall be born in the ages that are yet to come, does not make any difference to this fact—Christ hath borne his sins if he trusts in Jesus as his own Saviour. This is the sign and token by which he may assuredly know that he hath a saving and eternal interest in the precious blood of Jesus: "He that believeth on him is not condemned." The gate of grace is set very wide open in our text; if it were not, some poor sinners would be afraid to enter. "Oh!" asks one, "is this mercy for me? Is it for me?" Well, friend, I will ask thee a question,—Wilt thou trust Christ? Wilt thou come to him this very moment, and take the mercy that he freely presents to all who will accept it? If so, I am sure that it is thine, as sure as I am that it is mine.

Possibly, somebody has come in here hoping to hear something new; but I have nothing new to tell, nor do I wish ever to have anything more new than this, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; or this, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When Dr. Judson went home to America from Burma, there was a large congregation gathered together, and they requested the returned missionary, the veteran of so many years of service, to address the assembly. He stood up, and simply told the story that I have again told you to-night, the story of Christ suffering in the stead of sinners, and of Christ saving all who trust him. Then he sat down; and one who sat next him said to him, "I am afraid the friends are rather disappointed; they expected to hear something interesting from you." He said, "I have spoken to them, to the best of my ability, upon the most interesting subject in the whole world; what could I have done better than that?" "Yes," said the other; "but, after having been so long abroad, they thought that you would tell them some interesting story; they did not think you would come all the way from Burma just to tell them only that." The missionary then rose, and said, "I should like to go home feeling that, although I have come all the way from Burma, I do not know anything that I can tell you that I think is half so good for you to hear, or half so interesting, as the story of the love of Christ in dying to save sinners."

The good doctor was right; and I feel, just as he did, that there is nothing so interesting as the story of the cross. You want to hear it, you who are already saved; and you want to hear it, you who are not yet saved. *You* must hear it, for there is no hope of salvation for you except as faith shall come to you by hearing, and specially hearing that portion of the Word of God which deals most closely with the cross of Christ.

Now, secondly, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

How are we to have a part and lot in that great sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary? The answer of the text is, "*Behold*"—that is, look to "*the Lamb of God.*"

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

"Behold the Lamb of God" means believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in him as your Saviour, accept God's revelation concerning him, and rely upon him to save you. This is the way of salvation.

Notice *how opposed this is to the idea that we are critically to understand the doctrines of the Gospel before we can be saved*. How many persons there are who want to know this and to understand that! They come to us, and say, "Here are two texts that do not seem to us to square with one another, and there are those two doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility which do not appear to be consistent with each other. Must we understand all these mysteries before we can be saved?" O foolish people! they remind me of one who is shipwrecked, and who, as the lifeboat comes up to the sinking ship, or to the spar upon which he is floating, says to the captain, "Before I can get on board that lifeboat, I want to know the exact number of planks there are in it; and I do not think that knowing that would content me, I should like also to know how many rivets and bolts there are in the boat; and I want also to know what is the theory of the operation of the oars upon the waves, and how it is that boats are propelled." If a man ever did talk thus, I am pretty sure that the captain of the lifeboat would exclaim, "What a fool the man is! He is in danger of drowning, yet he talks like this! Come into the boat at once, or we must leave you to perish!" And I also feel that you unconverted sinners have no business to set yourselves up as critics of the Word of God. There is something much simpler than that for you to do, and the text bids you do it. It is this, "Behold the Lamb of God"; do not sit down to manufacture difficulties; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

There are various ways of using a piece of bread. One man may take it, and employ it in rubbing out the pencil marks which he has made upon a sheet of paper. Another man may take it to the analyst, and ask him to see how much alum the baker may have put into it. But the really hungry man, the one who gets the most good out of the piece of bread, eats it; and that is what I recommend you to do with the Gospel; not begin to turn it about this way and that, not ask all manner of questions concerning it, but feed upon it; and the way to feed upon it is to accept and believe it, and especially to put

your trust in Jesus Christ, who is the very essence of the Gospel.

"Behold the Lamb of God," says the text ; then *that command is opposed to the question that troubles so many—whether they are elect or not*. That is like wanting to read Hebrew before one has learned to speak English. Such people are not content to learn the ABC, the elements, the rudiments of the Gospel first, they want to know the Gospel's classics, or mathematics, or metaphysics first, but that cannot be.

During the recent hard frosts, I have struck an acquaintance with a little friend who, I am afraid, may desert me by-and-by, but our friendship has been exceedingly pleasant to each of us thus far. On the little balcony outside my study windows, I observed a robin frequently coming, so I took an opportunity, one morning, to put some crumbs there, and I have done the same thing every morning since ; and my little feathered friend comes close up to the window-frame, and picks up the crumbs, and I do not perceive that he has any difficulty about whether those crumbs were laid there for him, or whether I had an electing love towards him in my heart. There were the crumbs, he wanted them, and he picked them up, and ate them ; and I can tell you that, in doing so, he exactly fulfilled my purpose in putting the crumbs there. I thought that he acted very wisely ; and I think that, if a poor sinner wants mercy and he sees that there is mercy to be had, he had better not pause to ask, "Did God decree me to have it?" but go and take it, and he will then find that, in doing so, he is fulfilling God's decrees. My little robin friend is very wise in his way, for he has called a friend of his to join him at the feast on the balcony. How he did it, I do not know ; but he managed to tell the blackbird all about the crumbs, and he brought him last Friday morning to see them for himself. The blackbird was rather shy at first, and stood for a while on the iron bar of the balcony ; but, after looking in at the study window, he hopped down, and neither he nor the robin asked whether it was my purpose that the blackbird should have any of the crumbs ; but there were the crumbs, and they were both hungry, so they came and fed together.

So, if any of you find Jesus Christ for yourselves, and you know some poor soul who wants him, do not you begin asking whether it is God's purpose or decree that he also should find the Saviour ; you go and invite him to come to Jesus, and then both

of you come to the Saviour together ; and then, just as the robin and blackbird exactly fulfilled my purpose in throwing out the crumbs, so, when you and your friend too come to Christ, you will rejoice to find that you have both of you fulfilled the eternal purpose of the divine decree of the great heart of God.

Ah! but this beholding of the Lamb of God is a thing to which men cannot readily be brought. I know many whose consciences are truly awakened, and who see themselves as sinners in the sight of God ; but, instead of beholding the Lamb of God, they are continually beholding themselves. I do not think that they have any confidence in their own righteousness, but they are afraid that they do not feel their guilt as much as they ought. They think that they are not yet sufficiently awakened, sufficiently humbled, sufficiently penitent, and so on, and thus they fix their eyes upon themselves in the hope of getting peace with God. Suppose that, yesterday, or the day before, you had felt very cold, and therefore you had gone outside your house, and fixed your gaze upon the ice and the snow, do you think that sight would have warmed you? No ; you know you would have been getting colder all the time. Suppose you are very poor, and you studiously fix your mind's eye upon your empty pocket, do you think that will enrich you? Or imagine that you have had an accident, and that one of your bones is broken, if you think very seriously of that broken bone, do you think that your consideration will mend it? Yet some sinners seem to imagine that salvation can come to them through their consideration of their lost and ruined condition. My dear unconverted hearers, you are lost whether you know it or not. Take that fact for granted. If you would be saved, look not at yourselves, but "behold the Lamb of God." He has been sent by his Father to be the Saviour of sinners, and it is by trust in him that peace and pardon will come to you. I pray you not to suppose, for a single moment, that your repentance, your tears, or your softened heart can prepare you for Christ. Do not come to Christ because you have a tender heart, but come to Christ to get a tender heart. Do not come to him because you are fit to come, but because you want to be made fit ; and remember that—

*"All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."*

Let me also *warn you against the notion that your prayers can save you apart from beholding Christ*. I believe that it is both the duty and the privilege of every living soul to pray; but that the first command to a sinner is to pray, I deny. The first command is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"; and when thou hast done that, thou wilt soon get to praying. I think it is stated, in McCheyne's life, that after an earnest sermon, he found a man under deep concern of soul; and, after saying a word or two to him, he said, "I cannot stop longer with you myself, but there is one of my elders who will pray with you." The elder did so, and he prayed in so fervent a fashion that it was remarked that he seemed to be like Jacob wrestling with the angel until he prevailed. The man afterwards came to see Mr. McCheyne, and he said to him, "I am very thankful that I was at your church that night; I feel very happy, and I believe I am saved." "Well," said McCheyne, "what makes you feel so happy?" "Oh!" he said, "I have great faith in that good man's prayers." McCheyne at once said, "My friend, I am afraid that good man's prayers will ruin you; if that is where you are putting your confidence, you are utterly mistaken." He was quite right, and your own prayers will be just such an obstacle in your way if you trust them instead of trusting to Christ. "I know I pray," says one, "and I am very earnest in prayer." Well, I am glad of that as far as it goes; but if you have not something better to trust to than your own prayers, your prayers will ruin you; for the look of faith is not to be given to prayer, but to Christ. Our text says, "Behold the Lamb of God." I have told you what that means—look by faith to the sacrifice that Christ made for sinners on the cross at Calvary; and if you look to anything else for salvation, you will not find it. Even your prayers, apart from faith in Christ, will not save you from everlasting destruction. O sinner, get away from everything else to Christ!

*"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."*

This great truth, that believing is the divinely-appointed means of salvation, may be illustrated by the old story of the children of Israel and the serpent of brass. You have heard it scores of times; yet I beg you to listen to it once more. When

the people were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, they were commanded to look to the serpent of brass that was lifted upon a pole; and whosoever looked, lived. They had nothing to do but to look. Moses lifted up the serpent, and pointed to it, and cried, "Look! Look! Look! and be healed." Possibly there were some who said they were bitten too badly to look. Well, if they could not or did not look, they would die. They might think it was a proof of their humility to say, "We are too sick to be cured"; but if they did so, they would die whether they were humble or not. O, do not be lost through a mock humility which is really abominable pride! You are not too great a sinner to be saved. I will venture to say that you will dishonour Christ if you ever think such a thing; so let not that sinful thought destroy you.

There may be others who said, "We shall not look to the brazen serpent, for we have only got a mere scratch; it will soon be gone." But you know a poison scratch means death; and if your sin were only a scratch, (and it is much more than that,) it would mean eternal damnation for you. So look to Jesus, I implore thee, just as thou art; look now, look and live.

Perhaps there was one who said, "My father has a famous recipe for serpent bites; it was given to him by a celebrated doctor in Egypt; so we will mix up the proper ingredients, and so get cured." Well, if any who were bitten were to act and speak like that, they would all die; the deadly venom would certainly destroy them, whatever ointments they might use. A look at the brazen serpent gave life; but the refusal to look brought death.

There may have been some fine gentlemen there who had imbibed sceptical notions during their life in Egypt. They were so clever that they thought they knew a great deal more than the Lord's servant to whom God had specially revealed the only effectual remedy, so they turned on their heels, and said, "Such a remedy as this is utterly ridiculous; it is not according to the laws of physics that the mere looking at a piece of brass can heal people of the bites of snakes"; so they perished. Notwithstanding all their learning and wit, notwithstanding their jeers at the divinely-appointed remedy, they perished; and nobody in the whole camp was healed except those who were simple enough and wise enough to take God at his word.

Then, though they were terribly bitten, and their blood was set on fire by the poison, and though some of them were in a truly desperate state, when they just looked at the serpent of brass, in a moment their blood again flowed healthily through their veins, and their strength returned to them in all its former vigour; and there shall be no soul saved in the whole world except by looking to the crucified Christ of Calvary. All trust in christening, or even in baptism, in confirmation, in sacraments, in ceremonies, in priests, and popes, and relics, are all a lie together; but, so long as God's Word remains true, he who looks by faith to Christ alone must and shall be eternally saved. Oh, how can I utter this truth so as to make it plainer, or how shall I plead with you so as to bring you all to trust in Christ? I cannot do this, but I pray the Holy Spirit to do it, for he can; and then you will believe in Jesus, and so receive life everlasting.

Our time has fled; otherwise, I was to have answered a third question, WHY SHOULD WE THUS LOOK?

The answer would have been that God has appointed this as the only way of salvation; that those who obey the command of the text will obtain immediate salvation; and that, being saved, they shall have joy and peace in believing; and that those who neglect or refuse to "behold the Lamb of God" must, without doubt, perish everlastingly. Of his infinite mercy, may God graciously grant that none, whom I am addressing, may refuse to believe in Jesus, but may everyone look unto him, and live, live now, and live for ever.

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”—John 8: 12.

OUR Lord did not speak in this way at the beginning of his ministry. He did not thus bear witness to himself, saying, “I am the Light of the world.” But it was befitting on this occasion, when the people before him had already received sufficient evidence from other quarters. John the Baptist, whom all men counted for a prophet, had testified that Christ was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The witness of John they rejected; startling, if not conclusive, as it must have been, considering the esteem in which his oracular voice was held. Moreover, Jesus himself had wrought conviction in their own hearts by his own teaching. Had they not listened to his famous Sermon on the Mount? Could they not feel the authority with which he spoke? Did they not confess to the impressions he produced on them? The weight and the wisdom of his discourse manifested a power that could melt their thoughts into the very mould of his ministry. Nor was it merely his teaching, transparent though that was; but the signs he showed and the miracles he wrought with the majesty of his voice and the virtue of his touch proclaimed that he was the Light of the world. Thus the infirmities of the creature called forth his divine compassion. With radiant eyes of pity he looked on the wretched, and gave them quick relief; he shone on their sadness like the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his beams. They hailed his visit in every town and village as the healer of all that were diseased. Might not the quick sense of every unprejudiced spectator detect in him the Messiah, and welcome his advent to the world?

At length, as though aggrieved by their unbelief, he speaks loudly and proclaims plainly, “I am the Light of the world.”

Such high ground does he take before his adversaries. Well might he say it to their teeth. Hardly an hour before he had flashed that light into their eyes and blinded them with its brilliance. They had stood before him, with the unhappy woman they sought to make the instrument of entangling him; and anon they had sneaked out of his presence conscience-stricken, when he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." One ray of his omniscience had lighted up the secret chambers of their memory, and exposed, at least to themselves, the righteous law they had broken, and the crimes they had to answer for. He who could thus convince them is able to convince the world of sin. He who lit up the deepest recesses of the heart is the Light of the world.

First, JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

That Jesus is the Light—the Light of the world—is to be seen in all parts of his blessed history. Look at him in his cradle. Shines there a star above the house wherein the young child sleeps? Brighter far than yonder star is he who lies cradled in the manger. He has come, the predictions of whose advent had illumined centuries of darkness. As a babe, devout men hail him, "A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." To the eye of faith, what radiance emanates from the new-born babe! Look, for the like was never looked on before. There God is veiled in human flesh. Behold the mystery of the incarnation. God is manifest in our nature; he dwells among us. The light is clear and dazzling.

Well might the angels have sung, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Sweet Babe! thou hast pierced the thick darkness of earth's sorrow; thou hast enlightened her scenes of sadness, infusing joy into her gloom. Thy coming revealed the love of God, his sweet compassion, and his tender pity towards the guilty sons of men. With growing years, while his increasing wisdom kept pace with his increasing stature, he shone, exhibiting a child's delight in the two tables of the law; his first concern being to do his heavenly Father's business, and his constant habit being to submit himself, and to honour his earthly parent. Not rashly or recklessly did he begin to teach. His baptism throws a wonderful

light upon consecration to God; and the dire temptations that quickly followed, in all of which he foiled the tempter, have thrown a brilliant light on the pathway of Christian ministers.

As a preacher, he was luminous. He expounded the spirituality of the law. Light penetrated the precept through and through as he made the very essence of purity apparent. His light cleared the law of the mists and fogs that the rabbinical writers had gathered around it. He shed light, too, upon the covenant of grace. He promulgated the Gospel of peace among the sons of men. He told of God the Father, willing to receive his prodigal children back into his bosom. His parables threw wondrous light upon the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven. His counsels and his cautions brought the final destinies of the righteous and the wicked into full view. Eternity dawned on his hearers while he spake. His own life exhibited the power of love, the value of sympathy, and the virtue of forgiving injuries. His death gave yet more palpable evidence of unfaltering submission to the will of God, and unflinching self-sacrifice for the welfare of men. Oh! beloved, the light of Christ comes out brightest upon the cross. Someone called it the Pharos of this world's sea. So it is. This is the lighthouse that throws its beams across the dark waters of human guilt and misery, warns men of the rocks, and guides them to the haven.

A Saviour! God in human flesh! He whom the seers predicted: "A king shall reign in righteousness," appears as the divine symbol represented him—"a Lamb slain." Behold him shedding his precious blood to atone for the sins of men. Never did such light shine on the law and the prophets. Never did such light gleam on the faith and hope of pure hearts. Never did such light irradiate the repentance and conversion by which sinners are retrieved. Behold the Sun as he cometh forth from his chamber, and rejoiceth to finish his course! He before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified, hath seen a light which doth outshine all earthly splendour. The sin and the sorrow, the shame and the sentence, all vanish when we see the Redeemer die for us.

Into the sepulchre you can peer now that Christ has broken down the door and rent away the veil. Through it you can look. For those that follow Christ, it is a passage into everlasting

life. He has brought life and immortality to light. Since he has risen from the tomb and left the dead, light, clear and transparent, shines on the exodus of the soul from earth. On, onward still, track his path as in his ascension he goes flaming up the skies. There, there is a road of light that shows us the way to God. He enters heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. There, as our representative, he sheds the light of comfort down upon us. There he waits, and while he waits he wills that where he is there should his people be. Oh! happy thought, to-day, my brethren, amongst the sons of men, Christ is still the light. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be his representative here on earth. He testifies of Christ. The Divine Paraclete occupies the place of our departed teacher. The Church, inspired by the blessed Spirit, with ten thousand tongues, proclaims the Gospel of salvation. "Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus. In his people, Christ still shines forth with even a brighter light than in the days of his earthly sojourn. He has ten thousand reflectors, instead of twelve. Ten thousand times ten thousand tongues proclaim his Gospel; and ten thousand times ten thousand hearts burn and blaze with the light of the Divine Word. Christ is the Light of the world. From his cradle to his throne, and onward till he cometh in full splendour at the second advent, the Lamb is the Light that illuminates this dark earth.

Second, JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT.

There are other lights. Before his coming there had been some light typical. Do you not remember that a golden lamp stood in the holy place, with its seven branches? It was an admirable piece of sacred furniture, and highly instructive; but Jesus seems to put it away. In fact, it had been already put away. He had come to put an end to its meaning by fulfilling its intent. "This was not the light; it was only the type of the light. I am the true light," he says. Even that light which flamed across the desert way when Moses led the host of God through the wilderness was but a typical light. The veritable pillar of cloud and fire is Jesus, who leads the whole host of God's elect through this weary wilderness to the Canaan of the blessed.

Jesus Christ was the true Light *in opposition to the smoking flax of tradition*. Listen to those rabbis! They think themselves the light of the world. Their sophism is an endless strife of words; their research is not worth your study; their knowledge is not worth the knowing. They can tell you exactly which is the middle verse of the Bible, and which is the middle letter of the middle word. They discussed their paradoxes till they became addle-headed. They refined on their subtleties till doctrine dwindled down into doubt; simple truth was degraded into silly twaddle; their translations of Scripture were a travesty, and their commentaries an outrage upon common-sense. But Christ, the true, the heavenly Light, extinguishes all your earthly luminaries. The Jewish rabbi, the Greek philosopher, the ecclesiastical father, and the modern theological thinker, are meteors that dissolve into mist. They make void the Word of God through their traditions or their conjectures. Believe what Jesus said, and his Apostles taught, and what you have had revealed to you in his own pure Word—Christ is the true Light.

In opposition to the glare of priestcraft, with which so many in all ages have been enamoured, Christ is the Light of the world. There is some reason to suppose that this declaration of our Lord bore allusion to a custom observed among the Jews at that time in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles. Maïmonides says that on the previous evening two enormous candelabra—golden lamps—of a vast size were set up in the court of the women in the open air, and that these flamed with such a brilliant light that they appeared to illuminate the whole city of Jerusalem. And the women came with a torch-light procession, and stood around these flaming candelabra, and there executed a sort of sacred dance and solemn pageant. This was done, not on the authority of Moses, but on the authority of tradition, to keep the people in mind of the cloudy and fiery pillar of the wilderness. The Feast of Tabernacles, you know, was designed as a memorial of the forty years that the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, dwelling in tents; but this particular rite was of their own invention, a supplementary observance, intended to remind the people of the fiery pillar that illumined the camp in those days of yore.

Now it is supposed, not, I think, without good reason, that

it was on the morning after this celebration that Jesus stood in the court. The lamps were gone out ; but the golden columns, that the night before had flamed, still remained in their places, the remnant of a spectacle, the lamps minus the light. Just then the sun was rising in its own peerless splendour. The scene they beheld gave force to the sentence he uttered. The lamps which the priests had lit—a fit emblem of superstition—were all going out, perhaps with a noxious smell, while the mighty orb of day was rising, when Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." Whether the scene and the circumstances were as has been so well imagined, or not, the truth is fitly illustrated by the similitude. When every lamp that ever man has kindled, and fed with the oil of superstition, shall have died out, as they must expire, our Lord Jesus Christ shall, like the morning sun, make glad the sons of men. Away ye go, ye bright meteors of the night, around which the children of superstition execute their maddened dance of implicit belief! Away ye go! Already ye begin to go out. I see how ye all flicker, even now. The day cometh on apace in which the blast of God's eternal Spirit shall blow you out in everlasting night. But Jesus shines; he is the true Light, and will shine on for ever.

Very different, too, is the light of Christ *from the sparks which are to be seen all the world over*. Every now and then a scientific gentleman picks up a flint arrow-head, and he strikes a wonderful light with it; and he that has his tinder-box ready and a brimstone match may soon think he has got the true light, till another philosopher comes and, with the lid of the aforesaid tinder-box, puts out that light. This is the cardinal virtue of philosophers; they extinguish one another. Their fine-spun theories do not often survive the fleeting generation that admires them. A fresh race starts fresh theories of unbelief, which live their day, like ephemera, and then expire. Not so the light of Christ; it burns on, and beams for ever.

We have friends who have been dazed by the light of "public opinion"—a very bright light that. And we have known some decent scholars who have been enraptured with "the light of the nineteenth century"—a wonderful luminary indeed, but slightly darkened by the follies, frauds, and crimes which every day's newspaper reveals.

We have heard more than enough of the light of the Church, in which we can discern nothing but colours and conceits, borrowed from the mediæval darkness of Christendom. But we have the trustworthy and the true when we hear him exclaim, "I am the Light." Where else shall light be found? Where shall the bewildered sons of men find a reliable guide? In the teaching of the person, the life, the death, the sacrifice of the Christ of Nazareth, we have light self-evidential, palpable by its own brilliance.

Guiding light is here alike clearly visible. This to follow is not fallacious. "I am the Light of the world; he that *followeth* me shall not walk in darkness." Thus, then, is he a light that is to be followed. Do any of you want to enjoy the light that streams from Christ, be assured you cannot realise it by reading about it—you must follow it. If a man could travel so fast as always to follow the sun, of course he would always be in the light. Now he that follows Christ shall never walk in darkness. To follow him means to commit yourselves to him, to believe him, and yield yourselves up, obediently doing what he bids, and implicitly accepting what he says. You must have no other Master. Say not, "I will be taught by Calvin," or "by Luther," or "by Wesley," or "by anybody else." Jesus Christ only must be your light. His word, by the testimony of his Spirit, must be your sole authority.

Third, JESUS IS THE GUIDING LIGHT FOR THE SOUL.

For the soul that panteth after God. Dost thou say, with Philip, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"? Jesus saith, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Christ is the guiding light through the multitude of authors. If you want to thread your way among them, let the early Fathers, the sturdy Reformers, the rigid Puritans, and the modern evangelists be your companions, if so it please you; but let him be your guide, and his counsel your stay, till you reach the gates of glory. Amidst the conflict of opinions, his sure Word will prove your safe chart. He is the guiding light through sickness and suffering; trust him, and he will make your bed in your sickness; he will bring lasting benefits out of your most lamentable afflictions. He is the

guiding light through death's dark vale. In those gloomy shades you need fear no ill if you keep close to him.

Christ has said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness"; so the terror by night flies at his presence. The atoning blood shall speak peace to you. Ignorance shall vanish before the brightness he manifests. Christ shall teach you. Despair shall dissolve before the sweet beams of hope. Even doubt, with all the indecision that comes of it, melts at the sound of his animating voice, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

Fourth, JESUS IS THE UNIVERSAL LIGHT.

He says, "I am the Light of the world." He does not merely say, "I am the Light of the Jews," or "I am the light of the Gentiles." He is both. He is the Light of all mankind. There is no clear light in which any man can discern God, or rightly understand himself, perceive the bitterness of sin, or apprehend the destiny and the doom of heaven and hell, but what flows through Jesus Christ. I do not doubt that among the various religious professions spread over the world—in many of which Christianity is much debased—there are devout persons who enjoy a share of communion with God and a sense of pardoned sin, though the tone of their thoughts, like the tongue of their utterance, widely differs from our own; but it is all through one common Lord, our Saviour Jesus Christ, they find acceptance.

When I get hold of a book that teaches erroneous things, yet if there is a savour of Jesus Christ in it, I censure the faults without condemning the author. Never let my animadversions be mistaken for anathemas. I sometimes perceive that the man who wrote it has evidently found salvation, because he has laid hold of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that follows him is on the right tack. Though he may err in a thousand minor considerations, by following Christ in the main thing he is safe. Learn of him and obey him in all things—then shalt thou be blessed thyself and useful to others. Happy the man that hath seen this light and walks in this light of Christ, for "this is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world!" There is a little light in Mohammedanism. Indeed, considering the age in which Mohammed lived, he had a very great deal of light; the religion of the Koran is immeasurably superior

to the religions of the age in which the prophet flourished. He even taught the unity of the Godhead most clearly. Yet the light in the Koran is borrowed from the Old and New Testament. It is borrowed light. The intelligence is pilfered.

The light of the Parsee, the light of Zoroaster, the light of Confucius came originally from the sacred books of the Jews. From one source they must have all come, for all light comes from the great Father of lights. Wherever you alight upon any truth in strange places about man's state and condition, or about God and the way to safety, you may rest assured that the light, if tracked to its dawn, would lead you up to Jesus Christ ; for all the true light comes from him.

Christ is the Light of the world, destined to shed his beams over the whole earth. The day comes when all mankind will see this light. How often I have been told of late that the world is all going to rack and ruin, and that all that we ought to do is to try to man a lifeboat and save a few strugglers, hastening ourselves to leave the wreck before she breaks up! Well now, I am not so desponding as that. I am of opinion that, by God's good grace, we shall tug the old vessel off the rocks, and that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, for the Lord hath sworn that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. I cannot believe that this dispensation will be wound up as a tremendous failure, that the Gospel zealously preached everywhere shall result in only a few being saved, and that the whole economy shall go out in darkness as the snuff of a candle is extinguished. Nay, I look for better things. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The isles shall bring him tribute ; Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, yea, all kings shall fall down before him. I cannot help believing that the Gospel yet is to be triumphant. I look for the coming of Christ. Let him come when he may, our hearts will leap for joy to greet him. But for this dispensation to end without success would almost seem to me like thwarting the purposes of God.

It is not his way in the world. He has entered into battle with Satan deliberately, choosing poor feeble instruments like ourselves to confound the forces confronted against him ; and if he should withdraw his troops from the field, or come himself

to the front and take up the fight single-handed which his chosen legions could not conduct, it would look as if he had not wisely foreseen the engagement, or had needed to alter his plans to compass his ends. His Spirit can inspire inveterate feebleness with irresistible force. He can use means without miracles, or he can work wonders without wantonness. His first act augured auspiciously. The twelve Apostles, like a little compact square of grenadiers to fight against the foe, is no ill omen. It surely does not mean that the battle shall end till the enemy has turned his back and fled. Moreover, he keeps on sending fresh battalions; he raises up new troops; and every now and then, when the battle seems to waver, he recruits the ranks and sends out new enlistments, strengthening the ranks that are thinned, and harassing the enemy with his reserves.

Courage, my brethren! There shall be revival after revival; there shall be reformation after reformation, shock of battle after shock of battle, and the dread artillery of God's great Gospel shall be fired off against the hosts of hell. The gods of the heathen shall fall. Antichrist shall be overthrown. Babylon shall sink, like a millstone, in the flood. The crescent of Mohammed must wane into eternal darkness. Israel shall behold her King, and the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered at his feet. So let our faith excite our courage, and our courage stimulate our patience, and our patience give zest to the full assurance of hope, while we worship our Lord Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

Fifth, HOW ARE WE ACTING TOWARDS HIM?

Do any of us *shun the Light*? I know some men slight the privileges they ought to prize. They do not want to know him whose going forth is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth. They never read the Bible, or search into the history, the prophecy, and the promises. They do not like an earnest ministry. They have a sort of happy-go-lucky style of religion; they take in whatever anybody else tells them; they attend their place of worship as a matter of habit, and observe all the proprieties of fashion; but as to doing right or seeking light, they seldom or never give it a thought. They do not count it desirable. Too much light would expose much that would not

bear inspection. If you are afraid of light, be suspicious of yourself, for it is deceit that dreads detection. Who are the people that like darkness rather than light? If it were put to a meeting of the inhabitants of London, who would vote for putting out the gas at night? Well, I warrant you, every burglar would; every garotter would; and there are certain libertines who would rather like it. Every man that doeth evil hateth the light. I do not mean to compare you with those gentlemen. Still, the saying is very comprehensive, "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved." Of course, when some men sneer we can appreciate their sensitiveness. The doctrine of Christ does not suit the dissolute. Lax living never does lead up to an admiration of pure piety. What a price the profligate have to pay for their pleasures! Are you conscious of anything you want to conceal? Look closely at it yourself. Recollect that you will have to look at it in that great day when the secrets of all hearts will be exposed. When Jesus comes "to judge the world with righteousness and his people with equity," from the light of justice, from the heat of judgment, nothing whatsoever shall be hid. Be wise, therefore, to repent now of the evil, lest calamity reach you when there is none to commiserate.

Do I see a curl of the lip, a shrug of the shoulder, a cynical expression of the countenance, as someone asks, Are we really, then, to regard the Christ you speak of, the atonement you preach, the resurrection you are so confident about, as the light of the present age, the light of other ages; in fact, the light of the world? You put it well and you look well as you put the question. It occurs to me that I might meet you in altered circumstances, when your tone would be altered likewise. Flesh is frail. Your eye will not be always full of lustre; your spirits will not be always blithe and gay; your health will not be always strong and vigorous. Not yet have you felt your need of the light which has irradiated past ages, can enlighten this age, and will shine with undiminished glory in the everlasting age. Proud man, are you a philosopher or a politician? Are you a man of science, or a mere sciolist—a pretender? Know this, that in darkness thou didst enter this world, years passed before you dreamed that life had a purpose; and in darkness, denser still, thou must make thine exit, if, pleased with a

fancy or enamoured of a fallacy, thou failest to see the Light that makes time and eternity resplendent. When we preach the Gospel purely and simply, we seem to be challenging the question on the part of some of you. To what purpose? The light we propound you do not need. How can I answer you? No arguments of mine will avail while you are blind to the perils you must meet with in traversing those unknown paths and untried experiences that lie before you. And as to the objections that any of you raise, let the man that takes objection to God's counsel; and spurns his kindness, answer for the rashness he will have to rue. Petty scruples! Paltry excuses! They betray your insincerity. It is absurd to trifle when the outlook might well make you tremble to plead for yourselves. You will not put your cause in the hands of the Counsellor. Hence the gloom that comes of your doubts; hence the wretchedness of a sinner's reflections on the grace of his Redeemer.

Men despise and attempt to disprove the Gospel, because it reveals truths that are unwelcome. It explodes their traditions; it disparages their opinions; it debases their cherished tastes; and so it destroys their peace of mind. It will not let them live comfortably in sin. The love of sin and superstition, a zeal for your clan and your craft, animate your opposition to malice and madness. Methinks I hear somebody say, "I wish I could see it." Well, the light that streams from Christ is visible; but not to the eyes that are shut; not to hearts that are hardened; not to the consciences that are seared. "Open your eyes; it is all you have to do." Look, sinner—look and live! All around you is the light of everlasting love. Do but open those poor eyes of yours, that unbelief has kept so long. The light is all around thee. Others see it and rejoice. Only let thine eyes be opened, and thou shalt hail the glorious orb which makes manifest all that is obscure and awful to thy present apprehension.

Have you seen the light? Is there one who says, "Well, thank God, I have seen that light"? Then be grateful and give thanks. We are, none of us, as thankful as we ought to be for the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed be the name of Jesus. For ever be his name adored. Magnify his grace for the light that shines; for the goodness it diffuses; for the joy, the abounding joy, it awakens on every side.

And now, let gratitude and benevolence prompt your zeal to

spread the light, to reflect it all around, near and far. I have been wont to say with honest gratitude that most, if not all, the members in fellowship with us were actually engaged in some work for Jesus. Is it so now? Are you all interested and occupied in telling and teaching the good news and the great lessons of the Gospel? We have no notion of leaving to pastors the whole work of the Christian ministry, in which every faithful disciple should take earnest part. One man alone, perhaps, may preach to such a throng as this; but if we are to have preaching everywhere, you must all preach by word and deed to circulate the heavenly wisdom in every sphere of earthly resort. Oh! my sisters and my brothers, the best of all preaching, because the most simple and unostentatious, is to be found in the ordinary intercourse you hold with your fellow-creatures, when with a good conversation you avail yourselves of all the occurrences and opportunities of daily life.

In your families the sweetness of your temper, the gentleness of your manners, and the purity of your actions should bear witness that you have been with Jesus and learned of him. The integrity of your business habits should speak for the sanctity of your morals, and commend the school in which you have been trained. Your character must be clear, or the utterance of your lips will be despised. Then an outspoken testimony will take hold of men's hearts. Tell your children, your brothers, your sisters, and your intimate friends the way of Jesus. Tell the strangers who sit by your side, if you can, something of your own sweet experience of the light that there is in Jesus. Since Christ is our light, and he has ordained us to be lights in the world, let us shine to the utmost of our capacity until the Master shall take us to dwell with him in the light for ever.

VI

THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."—1 John 4: 14.

TH^{ERE} are two things joined together in the text which must never be parted: "We have seen and do testify." In the first place, never let any man testify what he has not seen. If you are not personally aware of it, do not tell it; it is the personality of the testimony that is the power of the testimony. That truth which you have never experienced, you had better leave to somebody else to preach. You know how a judge will stop a witness when he begins to say what others have told him. "No, no," says he, "what did you see yourself, my good man? What do you know about this business on your own account? I do not want to know what others said to you about it. When you try to bring others to Christ, you must do it by bearing witness of what Christ has done for you. If he has never done anything for you personally, for *you*, you cannot testify for him, and must not pretend to do so.

In the next place, what you have seen you should testify. If you have seen these things for yourself, do what Mary did when she had seen the risen Christ: she ran to bring his disciples word. What right have you to see for yourself alone? No, no, tell the glad tidings. The light is not put to your candle for the candle's sake alone; it is that men may be enlightened by its beams. If you have received light from God, let your light so shine before men that they may see it, and glorify God for it.

I am afraid that this observation ought to trouble a great many professing Christians. They say that they have seen the Lord. I have no reason to doubt the truth of what they say; but, having seen, why do they not testify? In our text, it is written, "We have seen and do testify"; but in many cases, nowadays, it might be written, "We have seen, and do not

testify," for some who profess to have seen Christ by faith do not even come forward to confess him in baptism, according to his Word; and many do not unite with the visible church, and do not occupy themselves in the Sunday-school, or in any form of Christian usefulness. What will become of you who, having a talent, never put it out to interest? O slothful ones, who have wrapped your talent in a napkin, how will you answer for it in the day when the Master calls his servants to give in their reckoning?

First, then, let me speak a little about APOSTOLIC SEEING. John and his fellow Apostles say, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Note that this saying was, in their case, *eminently clear*. Let me read to you the beginning of this Epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." These men, who were chosen to dwell with Christ, to see his miracles, and to hear his teaching, come forward with a very clear witness. They tell us that which they had seen, that which they had heard, that which they had looked upon, and that which their hands had handled.

In the first place, they had heard Christ. This was a high privilege, for "Never man spake like this Man." Never was there such hearing as when Christ preached. The Apostles had heard their Master's voice in private as well as in public, when he expounded to them truths which he did not fully explain to the multitude. What marvellous sweetness there must have been in the voice of Jesus! I have no doubt that the melody of it would ring out in the Apostles' ears as long as ever they lived. They knew, from what they heard from his lips, that the Son of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was really before them, for they heard him say things which no mere man could have uttered. They heard him declare wonderful truths such as never fell from the lips of anyone but the long-promised Messiah, the Divine Messenger, who was sent of God. They had heard from him that which made them know that he was sent by the Father to save men.

John also says that the Apostles had seen Christ. For more than three years, they had seen him daily, constantly. They

had also looked upon him, the Apostle adds, apparently meaning that, sometimes, they had gazed upon him with fixed attention. You know what it is merely to see a person; but it is a different thing to look earnestly at him, to feel so struck by his appearance that you cannot help looking him up and down from head to foot. You are fascinated by him, your eyes are held captive by him, they seem to drink him in, and to photograph him on your soul. Now, John says that the Apostles did that with their Lord. They saw him, and their eyes looked upon him. They could not be mistaken about their Lord. John had seen him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he had also seen him on the cross. He says, in his Gospel, when writing of the soldier piercing Christ's side, "he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true."

The Apostles, therefore, were hearers of Christ, and seers of Christ. Besides that, they had handled him. One of them had laid his head on his Lord's bosom. After he had risen from the dead, Jesus said to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." They were not in any doubt that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, they could not doubt it, all their senses testified to the real incarnation of the Son of God. They knew that he was a real Person, clothed in real flesh and blood. Thus, they had heard, and seen, and handled the Christ of God.

Well now, perhaps some of you will say, "We wish we had their evidence; if we had been alive then, we could speak now with much greater confidence." Harken to me: the mere hearing of Christ would not convince anybody; there were thousands and tens of thousands who heard him, yet they heard nothing remarkable in his teaching, but even turned away loathing and hating him because of the truth which they could not bear. There was not much advantage in merely seeing him. Did not myriads see him? Yet they saw not his glory, and did not understand that he was the Redeemer of men. Even when he hung on the cross, many who saw him only jeered and sneered and turned their backs and went their way. As to handling him, did not the soldiers handle him when they scourged him? Did they not handle him when they laid the cross upon him, and when they laid him upon the cross? Oh! yes, there was more

than enough of handling, and rough handling, too; but they were convinced of nothing even by touching the precious body of Jesus.

The fact is, brethren, genuine faith comes not merely by the ear, or the eye, or the hand, but it is flashed into the soul—peradventure, through the ear—but always directly by the Spirit of God operating upon the heart; and if these Apostles had not had another sense, a spiritual sense, they would still have remained unbelievers. So, after all, they had no great advantage over you; and you, beloved, who know the Lord spiritually, may also be able truly to say, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

But mark you, next, granting that the Apostles were spiritually enlightened, their seeing was *eminently conclusive as to the mission of Christ*. What they saw was this, not only Christ, but “that the Father sent the Son.” Now, beloved, this was seen in Christ’s miracles. It is specially recorded of our Lord’s first miracle, when he turned the water into wine, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” It was rather a simple miracle, the turning of water into wine; but Jesus did it in such a marvellous manner that the thought flashed upon the Apostles as he did it, “This is the Son of God; this is the Messiah.” A grander miracle, which followed further on, is said to have had the same effect upon those who witnessed it. When our Lord Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, before he raised him, you remember that he said to Martha, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” And when he had called Lazarus back from the dead, those who were round about saw the glory of God beaming out in that miracle, and we read, “Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.” If any of you had been with Christ during his earthly life, and had been spiritually enlightened, you would have seen, in his walking the waves, or in his opening the eyes of the blind, or in his healing all manner of sick folk who were brought to him, something of his glory, and you would have felt that the evidence as to his mission was very conclusive.

But the Apostles also had conclusive evidence as to the Saviour’s mission in his life. What a life that was! I can admire

the life of Elijah without wishing to imitate it. I can admire all the lives of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New, as I find them recorded, and I can even forget their failings; but there is not one even of the purest and best lives that we have ever read in the sacred page that leaves upon us the impression that the life of Jesus does. It is not only perfect; it is divine. Singularly enough, it is more imitable than any other life, and yet it is inimitable. It is the most human of all lives, but it is superhuman to a very high degree; and yet in no one respect superhuman in the sense that it cannot be copied by our humanity. It was indeed an extraordinary life; one who could have seen it in its different phases, and learned by the Spirit's teaching what it all meant, must have been convinced that none but the Son of God could have lived like this. What the centurion said about his death, the enlightened observer would have said about his life, "Truly this was the Son of God."

What they saw was *eminently conclusive as to his being sent to save men*: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." There was nothing about Christ's life that was contrary to that declaration. He cursed no man; he called no fire from heaven upon any man. Even when wicked men had nailed him to the tree, he breathed a prayer for them. Every way, he was not a destroyer, but a Saviour. These men were themselves saved; saved from known sin, saved from grovelling occupations, saved from themselves; and they knew it. They knew that the Father must have sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, for he had saved them.

They had also seen him heal the sick. What a sight it must have been to see him going through the crowd, as he often did, when the people were laid on their beds in the streets, and others came thronging about him; when they saw him laying a hand on one here, and healing another there, and another there, and yet others yonder, as though he marched through a regiment of devils, and cleared a pathway for himself, not with sword and spear, but with his own gentle glance, and with a touch of his loving yet mighty hand! He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and those innumerable cures, which he so freely dispensed, were clear proofs to the Apostles that the Father had sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

But they knew it better still after they had seen him die,

after they had beheld his empty sepulchre, after they had felt the descending Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then, when tongues of fire were given them, and they went out to speak in his name, and three thousand felt the mighty touch of grace, they knew that the Father had sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. And when the bonds were broken which held them in as preachers to the Jews, and they went throughout all Asia, and boldly crossed to Europe, going everywhere preaching the Word, and Parthians, Medes, and Elamites heard the Gospel, and Greeks and Romans bowed in penitence, and Philippians and Colossians flocked to Christ, then the Apostles understood that the Father had sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

The second thing is, OUR SEEING. Brethren, some of us have seen that Jesus is sent of God to be the Saviour of the world. How have we seen it? Well, first, by *the power of his Word*. You have noticed, I daresay, that singular incident concerning the woman of Samaria. The woman told the men of Sychar that she had met a man who had told her all that ever she did, and she believed that he was the Messiah. They listened to her words, and then they went out to hear the Saviour himself. He preached to them, and what was the result? The Samaritans said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Do you not think that, when John was writing this Epistle, the record of what the woman of Samaria said was in his mind, and that he unconsciously repeated the words "The Saviour of the world" using the very same phrase as the men of Sychar had done? They were convinced of Christ's Messiahship simply by the power of his Word. There are many of us who have the same evidence as these Samaritans had; we have experienced the power of Christ's Word. I do not mean that we have felt the force of human eloquence, or that we have known the weight of human argument, but we have proved the might of the Word of the Lord. There is a certain something which goes with the Word of God which is altogether independent of the mannerisms of the preacher; it is the truth itself which thrills us, conquers us, holds us in chains, leads us captive, sets us free, puts a new song into our mouths, and makes us dance with holy joy. You know that experience, do you not? I believe that often, in this

house of prayer, you have felt a power far beyond any force that human lips can possess; you know it has been so. You have gone home saying, "God hath spoken to my soul to-day, and I know that the Gospel is true, and that the Christ is divine. The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, for I have felt the matchless power of his holy Word."

Then there are three evidences, mentioned by John in the latter part of this Epistle, each of which is a present power to us. He says, in the eighth verse of the last chapter, "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Have you not felt *the influence of the Holy Spirit* as well as the power of the Word? Did not the Spirit come, and wither your righteousness, as the Sirocco of the desert destroys the flowers of the field? Did not the Spirit of God come, and put life into you when you lay like the dead? Did he not come, and point you to the Saviour; even giving you eyes with which to look to him? Has not the Spirit of God often illuminated you, quickened you, comforted you, guided you? Has he not been to you as the fire, and the dew, and the wind? Then, if you know the operations of the Spirit of God, and you do unless your profession is a lie, you also have seen that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

The next witness is concerning *the purging by the water*. Now, has not the water, which flowed from Christ's riven side, operated upon you? If you are what you profess to be, you are a clean man. Once you were foul enough; but you have been washed, and you are a different man now. The things you then loved are now horrible to you, and you hate them, for a great change has come over you. You have been washed from your love of filthiness and your delight in sin; and the washing process goes on every day, you are daily helped to leave off one sin and another; you are made not only to see the evil within you, but to conquer it. Is it not so? You know that, if the grace of God has not sanctified you, you are without one great evidence of its power; but if it has changed your character, then depend upon it you have an evidence that it came from God. Thus, we also "have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," because he has cleansed us, and made us to love holy things, and to hate everything which God hates.

The third witness tells of *the cleansing by the blood*. Do you know anything about cleaning by the blood of Jesus, the blood that speaks to a conscience all in a tempest through sin, the blood that gives access to God to sinners far off from him by wicked works, the blood which we plead in prayer, the blood which has become the foundation of all our hope? I can truly say that, when I first learnt the doctrine of the substitution of Christ, his dying in my room, and place, and stead, and understood that I had nothing to do but to look to him and live, it was with me as when the sun shines in Lapland after months of midnight. Oh, what a blessed dawning was that to my soul!

Besides all this—the power of the Word, the influence of the Holy Spirit, the purging by the water, and the cleansing by the blood of Jesus, we have other evidence, namely, *the aspirations of our souls*. Are there not, within you, longings and desires for which you never can account if there be not a Saviour for men? When God gave to humanity the appetite of hunger, you might have inferred from it that he meant to provide food to satisfy it. When he gave to us the capacity for thirst, we might be sure that, somewhere, there would be rippling rills from which that thirst might be slaked. When the Lord gave to us, as he has given, a sighing after holiness, a longing after nearness to himself, a devout hope that we shall be caught up to be with him where he is, these heaven-given longings are proofs that they will be gratified; and they cannot be unless there is a Saviour of men. Thank God, there is such a Saviour, who will give us all that for which we are sighing.

I can speak about matters of fact, which prove to me the power of my Lord and Master, for I have seen *the triumphs of Christ*. I have seen men, who used to live in sin and drunkenness, made honest and sober; and I have seen fallen women brought to Jesus' feet as penitents. All along what is growing to be a long ministry, the chariot of the Gospel, in which I have ridden, has had captives to grace Christ's triumphs. All along, multitudes have decided to quit the ways of sin, and have turned to the living God; and I must believe in the power of divine grace; I cannot doubt it. The proof of what the tree is, surely, is found in the fruit, and the fruit is most abundant. Ask the missionaries what Christ has done in the Southern Seas, and they will tell you of islands, once inhabited by naked cannibals,

where now men are clothed, and in their right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. The whole world teems with trophies of Christ, and shall yet more fully teem with them. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," and we preach with the full conviction that yet "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Now I come to my last point, and that is a practical one. Let me speak about APOSTOLIC TESTIFYING, AND OURS.

I trust that many of you can join in what the Apostle John said, "We have seen that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Now let us bear our testimony concerning it as the Apostles did, and, first, *we should do it in the same manner*. What was the Apostolic manner of testifying? Well, I should say that it was very fervent and ardent. Those first preachers of the Gospel never preached cold sermons. Why, some sermons hang like icicles upon the lips of the speaker; but the Apostles preached as if they were all on fire. Their lips were like the mouth of Etna when it vomits lava; every word burnt its way into the hearts and consciences of men. Never talk coldly of Christ, who was on fire with love to you; preach the Gospel ardently.

The Apostles also proclaimed their message very simply. I do not believe there ever was an apostolic sermon in which the preacher tried to show himself off; there is no record of any display of oratorical fireworks, no grand closing peroration. I always tell my students that this is the 12th commandment, "Thou shalt not perorate." Yet many preachers will do it; there must be something very splendid at the end of the discourse to impress people with the idea of how wondrously they can do it. Do not do it, brother, do not do it! Tell the people the way to heaven, and point it out to them as plainly as ever you can; and if there are two or three little words of plain Saxon that will do it, use them, and fling the long Latin words on the dunghill where they ought to rot; they are no good whatever in the pulpit, for we want speech that can be easily understood of the people, the plain speech of the common folk of our day.

But they also spoke very boldly. You never meet with any timidity in them. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived

that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled ; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Do not some preachers appear to apologize for what they are about to say? They trust that they will be excused for venturing to intrude their opinion. I would ask your pardon if I intruded my opinion, but in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ I have not any opinion of my own ; I preach God's Word to you, and at your peril do you reject it. You are bound to receive it as it comes from him, and no apology is to be made by the man whom God sends. So the Apostles spoke boldly in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and Jesus Christ of Nazareth backed up their words.

Thus, like the Apostles, we have to bear testimony for Christ, and *we should do it in the same power*. What was the power with which the Apostles testified? Was it the power of their superior education? They had not any, perhaps with the exception of Paul. They could manage a boat better than most of us can ; but that was their principal attainment. Did they speak in the power of being (—what is the word now?) "*en rapport* with the spirit of the age"? I may as well use a fine expression sometimes! Did they speak as men "keeping themselves abreast of the times"? Not a bit of it. They hated "the spirit of the age" in which they lived, and struggled against it with all their might. What was the source of their power? Their only power was the Holy Ghost ; and, brethren, we also must come to see that there can be no power in us to win a soul for Christ but the supernatural energy of God the Holy Spirit. If we have that, the work will be done ; if we are without it, we shall be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Then, again, if we are to testify as the Apostles did, *we should do it with the same message*. What was that message? "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Then, the world was lost ; we must not stammer in saying that. And every man in the world was lost ; by nature and by practice lost, with a great loss, a loss from which he could not recover himself, a loss from which only God could save him. We must bear our testimony to that truth. Then we must dwell upon the Sender of the Saviour : "The Father sent the Son," that great Father against whom we have rebelled, who will bring his wandering children home again, "The Father sent the Son." We must also

testify much about the Sent One: "the Father sent the Son," not an angel, not a man prepared by education or training; but he sent the Son out of his own bosom, the Son out of the glories of heaven. The eternal Son of God, commissioned by the Father, came to earth.

And with what design did Jesus come? He came to save, to save by making such a propitiation for sin that God could be justified, and also the Justifier of him that believeth. He came to save, by delivering us from the dominion of sin, that henceforth we should not serve sin, but should be lifted above it, right away from the power of everything that held us as slaves to Satan. And what was the scope of Christ's work? "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it, that the world through him might be saved. His one mission here was to be the Saviour. He will come a second time to be the Judge of all; but in his first coming he came to be a Saviour, and only a Saviour. He has gone up into heaven, but he is still the Saviour, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him; and he is the only Saviour. As a man may be said to be the doctor of a district because he is the only doctor in the district, so is Christ the Saviour of the world because he is the only Saviour who ever was or ever will be in this world.

He is "the Saviour of the world", that is to say, of all ranks, and classes, and conditions of men. No difference of colour, no difference of race, no difference of wealth, no difference of talent, no difference of standing and rank, no difference of education and attainment makes any difference to him. Jesus Christ has come to be the Saviour not of the rich, nor of the poor, the Saviour not of the learned, nor of the ignorant, but "of the world." He comes to save men as sinners. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," not merely great sinners or little sinners, open sinners or secret sinners, but plain "sinners." This is the sort of people for whom he laid down his life. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost; not that which was lost in one particular way or in another special way, but that which was lost any way, lost to itself, lost to God, lost to goodness, lost to hope, lost to heaven; aye if lost to morality, Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

He was sent to be the Saviour of the world, because no man, believing in him, is excluded from the merit of his death. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He will ultimately, as a matter of fact, save none but his elect. This will be the end of all his coming, and living, and dying; but that does not conflict for a single moment with the universal invitation that is to be given to you and to every creature under heaven: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Whosoever believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life. "Come unto me," says Christ, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

I pray you, receive our message, for to what end do we bear our testimony? I should like John to say a final word to you, and then I will have done. This is why we bear our testimony, *we do it with the same design* that led John to write concerning the life of Christ, "and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." There is salvation, there is a Christ ready to save. Look to him, blind eyes; look to him, dead souls; look to him. Say not that you cannot; he in whose power I speak will work a miracle while yet you hear the command, and blind eyes shall look, and dead hearts shall spring into eternal life by his Spirit's effectual working.

VII

PRINCE AND SAVIOUR

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."—Acts 5: 31.

THIS was part of the answer of Peter and the other Apostles to the question and declaration of the high priest: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Then Peter and the other Apostles replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree"; and, in the verse following our text, they claimed to be witness-bearers for the risen and reigning Prince and Saviour; and, more than that, they declared that they were co-witnesses with "the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

These Apostles were the representatives of Messiah the Prince, acting under his authority, and, so far as they could, filling up the gap caused by his absence. They asserted that their preaching and teaching had been done by divine command, which could not be set aside by any human authority, imperial or ecclesiastical; and that the true Prince of Israel, the Son of David, alone had the power and the right to issue commissions to those who owned allegiance to Jehovah. They declared that Jesus, whom the chief priests had crucified, was still alive, reigning in glory, enthroned at the right hand of God, and that they were only fulfilling his royal commands when they were "standing in the temple, and teaching the people."

Moreover, when the Apostles stated that, in addition to being a Prince, Jesus was also a Saviour, and that he had been exalted with his Father's right hand in order that he might "give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," they gave the very best reason in the world for their preaching, for they

were all engaged in preaching that sinners should repent, and in assuring those who did repent that their sins were forgiven for Christ's sake. I cannot conceive of any better argument than this, which the Apostles used when answering the high priest: "You command us not to teach in Christ's name; but the command of the Son of God, our Prince and Saviour, is 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'; so, as 'we ought to obey God rather than men,' we have filled Jerusalem with *his* doctrine; and we mean to go on preaching repentance and remission until, as far as we are able, we have filled the whole world with this doctrine." That purpose of Christ was, at least in part, fulfilled by the Apostles in their day. God did give repentance and remission of sins to a chosen remnant of Israel; and when the rest of the Jews rejected the testimony of Christ's servants, they said, as Paul and Barnabas did to the Jews at Antioch, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

We must never forget that we owe the first preaching of the Gospel to the Jews. They were, in all lands that were then known, the heralds of Christ, publishing the royal proclamation far and wide. Under the old dispensation, "unto them were committed the oracles of God"; and the Gospel of the new covenant was in the first instance entrusted to them, and it was through the Jews that it was made known unto us Gentiles. Let us remember this fact as we contemplate the glorious future both of Jews and Gentiles. Israel as a nation will yet acknowledge her blessed Prince and Saviour. During many centuries, the chosen people, who were of old so highly favoured above all other nations on the face of the earth, have been scattered and peeled, oppressed and persecuted, until sometimes it seemed as if they must be utterly destroyed; yet they shall be restored to their own land, which again shall be a land flowing with milk and honey. Then, when their hearts are turned to Messiah the Prince, and they look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn over their sin in so long rejecting him, the fulness of the Gentiles shall also come, and Jew and Gentile alike shall rejoice in Christ their Saviour.

First, let us learn that ALL WHO RIGHTLY RECEIVE CHRIST RECEIVE HIM BOTH AS PRINCE AND SAVIOUR. He is exalted this day for many purposes—as a reward for all the pangs he endured upon the cross, as our covenant Head and Representative, and that he may rule over all things for the good of his Church, as Joseph ruled over Egypt for the good of his brethren. Christ is exalted as a pledge of our exaltation, for “we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

But our text declares that *God has exalted Jesus that he may be to his own chosen people a Prince and a Saviour*; not that he may be a Prince only, or a Saviour only, but that he may be both a Prince and a Saviour. He is a Prince, to receive royal honours; a Prince, to be the Leader and Commander of his people; a Prince, whose every word is to be instantly and implicitly obeyed; a Prince, before whom we who love him will gladly bow, even as, in Joseph’s dream, his brethren’s sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf, and as they themselves afterwards “bowed themselves to him to the earth” when he became a great lord in Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ is a Prince among men, a Prince in his Church, and a Prince in the highest heavens; indeed, he is more than a Prince as we understand that word, for he is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” But he is also a Saviour, to be trusted; a Saviour, to be accepted with our whole heart; a Saviour who exactly meets our need, for we feel that we need to be saved, and we recognize our inability to save ourselves, and we perceive in him the ability, the grace, the power, and everything else that is required in order to save us. So he is a Saviour to be trusted and accepted as well as a Prince to be obeyed and honoured.

Let us never imitate *those who talk of Christ as a Prince, but will not accept him as a Saviour*. There are some who speak respectfully of Christ as a great Leader among men, a most enlightened Teacher, and a holy Man whose life was perfectly consistent with his teaching so that he can be safely followed as an Exemplar; he is their Prince, but that is all. We cannot occupy such a position as that; if we were to say that Christ is our Prince, but not our Saviour, we should have robbed him of that honour which is, perhaps, dearer to him than any other. It was not simply to reign over the sons of men that he came

from heaven to earth ; he had legions of nobler spirits than those that dwell in bodies of clay, every one of whom would gladly fly at his command to obey his behests. Besides, if he had pleased to do so, he had the power to create unnumbered myriads of holy beings who would have counted it their highest honour to be subservient to his will.

Mere dominion is not what Christ craved ; from of old his delights were with the sons of men because he had covenanted with his Father that he would save them. Therefore was he called Jesus, because he came to save his people from their sins. In order to accomplish that great purpose, it was necessary for him to take upon himself our nature, and to live a life of perfect obedience to his Father's will, and at last to die a shameful death upon the cross that he might offer the one sacrifice for sins for ever that alone could bring salvation to all who believe in him. We never read that Jesus said to his disciples, "I am longing for the hour when I shall take the reins of government into my hand, and wear upon my head the crown of universal sovereignty" ; but we do read that he said to them, "I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." We never read that he said to the Jews, "I am come to reign over you" ; on the contrary, when men would have taken him by force, and made him a king, he hid himself from them. He was a King, but not a man-made king, and his rule was to be a contrast to that of every other monarch. Christ's own description of his mission was, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Methinks that our royal Saviour puts the saving before the ruling, and if I call him Prince, and deny him the title of Saviour, he will not thank me for such maimed and mutilated honours. No ; God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, and we must receive him in both characters, or not at all.

For, mark you, *we cannot really receive Christ as Prince unless we also receive him as Saviour*. If we say that we accept him as our Prince, but reject him as our Saviour, is there, not merely disloyalty, but treason of the deepest dye in that rejection ? This gracious Prince tells me that I am lost and undone, and bids me trust to him to save me ; if I practically tell him that I do not need him to save me—and I do that by rejecting him—I virtually say that he came from heaven to earth on an un-

necessary errand, at least so far as I am concerned. If I do not put my trust in his expiatory sacrifice, I say, in effect, that his death upon Calvary was a superfluity, that he foolishly threw away his valuable life in needless self-sacrifice; but that would be rank blasphemy. If I reject Christ as Saviour, I do by that very act reject him as Prince. It is sheer mockery for me to say, "I honour Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, but I refuse to be washed from my sin and uncleanness in the fountain filled with his blood; I am willing to accept the Man Christ Jesus as my Exemplar, and I will try, as far as I can, to follow his steps, but I will not accept pardon at his hands."

If I talk like that, Christ is neither my Prince nor my Saviour, but I am his enemy; and, unless I repent, and bow before him in real homage, and accept him both as Prince and Saviour, he will at the last condemn me with the rest of his enemies who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." You may extol him with your tongue, but the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart would be far more prized by him than all your empty praises. It is a higher eulogium to Christ to stoop to kiss his pierced feet, and find in his wounds perfect healing for all the wounds that sin hath made, than to pronounce the most fulsome panegyrics upon his spotless character. He wants not the meaningless flatteries of men, but he thirsts for the trustfulness of souls that are willing to be saved by him. This is the best refreshment he can ever have, as he told his disciples when he had won to himself the soul of that poor fallen woman at Sychar, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

There are *some who seem willing to accept Christ as Saviour who will not receive him as Lord*. They will not often state the case quite as plainly as that; but, as actions speak more plainly than words, that is what their conduct practically says. How sad it is that some talk about their faith in Christ, yet their faith is not proved by their works! Some even speak as if they understood what we mean by the covenant of grace; yet, alas! there is no good evidence of grace in their lives, but very clear proof of sin (not grace) abounding. I cannot conceive it possible for anyone truly to receive Christ as Saviour and yet not to receive him as Lord. One of the first instincts of a redeemed soul is to fall at the feet of the Saviour, and gratefully and

adoringly to cry, "Blessed Master, bought with thy precious blood, I own that I am thine—thine only, thine wholly, thine for ever. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" A man who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that he is under solemn obligations to serve Christ; the new life within him tells him *that*. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself—body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord who has redeemed him, reckoning this to be his reasonable service.

It is not possible for us to accept Christ as our Saviour unless he also becomes our King, for a very large part of salvation consists in our being saved from sin's dominion over us, and the only way in which we can be delivered from the mastery of Satan is by becoming subject to the mastery of Christ. The "strong man armed" cannot keep us under his cruel sway when the stronger One overcomes him, and sets us at liberty. In order that we may be rescued from the power of the prince of darkness, the Prince of light and life and peace must come into our soul; and he must expel the intruder, and take his own rightful place as our Lord and Master, guarding by his own power what he has saved by his own right hand and his holy arm. If it were possible for sin to be forgiven, and yet for the sinner to live just as he lived before, he would not really be saved. He might be saved from some part of the punishment due to sin, but he would still be a most wretched man; for, if there were no other punishment for sin than the slavery and tyranny of sin's own self, that would be punishment enough to make a man's life utterly miserable, like the poor wretch chained to a corpse, and compelled to drag it about with him wherever he went.

Let a man once know what sin really is, and he needs nothing else to make him thoroughly unhappy. I was talking, only to-day, with a Christian brother about our crosses, and I said that I thanked God we were not left without a cross to carry. "Ah!" my friend replied, "but there is one cross we would gladly throw away if we could, and that is the heaviest cross of all—the body of sin and death that is such a burden to us." Yes, that is indeed a grievous burden to true Christians. That is the iron that enters into our very soul. That is the gall of bitterness, the deadly venom of the old dragon's teeth; and therefore, we do not really receive Christ as our Saviour unless

we also receive him as Prince; but when he comes to reign and rule in our mortal bodies, the tyranny of the usurper is broken, and we know Jesus as the complete Saviour of our body, soul, and spirit.

The man who is taught of God to understand this great truth will be a wise teacher of others. I believe that many errors in doctrine arise through lack of a clear apprehension of Christ's various relationships towards his spiritual Israel. To some, Christ is only a Prince, so they have a sort of lifeless legality. Others live in Antinomian licentiousness because Christ is not the Prince and Lord of their lives. But, beloved, he who receives Christ both as Prince and Saviour has the blessed and happy experience of resigning his own will and subjecting all the passions of his soul to the sacred control of his glorious Prince; and, at the same time, he daily realizes in his soul the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus, and so, as Mary sang, his spirit rejoices in God his Saviour.

There are preachers who preach mere morality. I trust their number is smaller than it used to be, but there are still too many professedly Christian ministers who are like that notable man who said that he preached morality till there was no morality left in the place. Yet afterwards, when he imitated Paul, and preached Christ crucified, he soon found that vice hid her dishonoured head, and that all the graces and virtues flourished under the shadow of the cross. So have we found it, and therefore, whoever may preach anything else, we shall still stick to the old-fashioned theme that Paul preached, that old, old story which the seeker after novelties condemns as stale, but which, to the man who wants eternal life, and longs for something that will satisfy his conscience and satiate his heart, has a freshness and charm which the lapse of years only intensifies, but does not remove.

The second lesson we learn from our text is that REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS ARE BOTH NEEDED BY THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE SAVED. Those needs are clearly indicated by Christ's offices as Prince and Saviour; inasmuch as he is a Prince, we must repent of our rebellion against him; and inasmuch as he is a Saviour, he is exalted with his Father's right hand to give us remission as well as repentance, and we must have both these blessings if we are to be saved.

First, *we cannot be saved without repentance*. No remission of sin can be given without repentance; the two things are so joined together by God, as they are in our text, that they cannot be separated. Many mistakes are made as to what true evangelical repentance really is. Just now, some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that "repentance is only a change of mind." It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind; but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one's mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving grace that is wrought by the Holy Spirit. God-given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed, and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form. We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learnt at our mother's knee—

*"Repentance is to leave
The sin we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more."*

I am always afraid of a dry-eyed repentance; and, mark you, if forgiveness could be granted to those who were not sorry for their sin, such forgiveness would tend to aid and abet sin, and would be no better than the Romish heresy that, when you have sinned, all you have to do is to confess it to a priest, pay a certain sum of money according to the regular Roman tariff, and start again on your career of evil. God forbid that we should ever fall into that snare of the devil! If I could keep on living in sin, and loving it as much as ever I did, and yet have remission of it, the accusation of the blasphemer that Christ is the minister of sin would be a just one; but it is not so. On the contrary, we must loathe sin, and leave sin, and have an agonizing desire to be clean delivered from it; otherwise, we can never expect the righteous God to say to us, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven."

Besides, if remission could be obtained without repentance,

the sinner would be left very much as he was before ; indeed, he would be in a worse condition than he was in before. If God *could* say to him, "I forgive you," and yet he remained unrepentant, unregenerated, unconverted, he would still be an enemy of God, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Forgiveness would only make such a man a more impudent, hardened, self-righteous enemy of God than he was before. If there is not such a thorough Spirit-wrought change in him that he flings away his weapons of rebellion, and casts himself penitently at the feet of his offended Sovereign, I fail to see in what sense we can call him a saved man. No ; repentance is the absolutely necessary prelude to remission.

On the other hand, *we cannot be saved without the remission of our sins following upon our redemption.* God exalted Jesus "with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Note that "repentance" and "forgiveness of sins" are separate and distinct gifts of the exalted Christ. Our repentance does not entitle us to claim from God the pardon of our sin apart from his gracious promise to give it to us. If I get into a man's debt, and then feel sorry that I owe him so much money, that regret will not pay my debt. If I transgress the law of the land, and when I stand in the dock say how grieved I am that I have broken the law, my sorrow will not pay the penalty that I have incurred. The magistrate or judge, in passing sentence upon me, may remit a portion of it because of my contrition, but I have no right to claim even that clemency on his part ; and, before God, my sorrow for my sins gives me no claim upon him for the remission of them.

Suppose I do now hate some sin that I once loved, or that I hate all sin, no credit is due to me, for that abhorrence of sin is what I ought always to have had. God had the right to claim from me the hatred of sin of every sort, but that hatred does not discharge the debt which I owe to God. I will go further than that, and say that no one ever repents of sin so thoroughly as he does when he knows that it is forgiven. Hence, when Christians begin their new life, they do not repent once, and then leave off repenting ; but repentance and faith go hand in hand with them all the way to heaven. Indeed, dear old

Rowland Hill used almost to regret that, even in heaven, he might not still have the tear of penitence glistening in his eye; but, of course, that is not possible, for of the redeemed in glory it is expressly declared that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Thirdly, BOTH REPENTANCE AND REMISSION ARE GIFTS FROM CHRIST. God hath exalted him "to give repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins."

The same Lord who gives the remission also gives the repentance. This is wrought in us by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, yet it is not HE who repents, he cannot do so, and he has nothing of which he needs to repent; but *we* repent, and though it must always be our own act, yet it is Jesus' gift to us, and the Spirit's work in us. Jesus bestows this gift upon us in his capacity as Saviour, and we never truly repent until we recognize Jesus as our Saviour, and put our whole trust in his atoning sacrifice. Smitten by the cross, our rocky heart is broken, and the streams of penitential tears gush forth even as the water leaped from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses in the wilderness. When Jesus grants the grace of forgiveness, at the same moment he gives the tender heart that mourns that it should have needed forgiveness. I believe that, if this truth were thoroughly understood, it would help many more to receive the Calvinistic system of theology which now puzzles them. I know that, when I first realized that my repentance was the gift of God, the whole doctrine of salvation by grace fell into my soul as by a lightning flash.

The other side of the truth is that *the same Lord who gives the repentance also gives the remission.* No one will dispute the fact that the forgiveness of sins is the free gift of the exalted Saviour. This priceless blessing could never be purchased by us, or deserved by us on account of our feelings, promises, doings, or anything else; it is a gift—freely, wholly, absolutely a gift of God's grace. It is given *with* repentance, but not given *for* or because of repentance; and wherever remission of sin is given, it works in the soul more and more repentance of sin; but it is, in itself, a gift, independent of repentance, yet given with it, a royal gift from the royal Saviour exalted with his Father's right hand. So that what you have to do is to look to Christ, and to Christ alone, to give you penitence while

you are impenitent, and to give you pardon when you are penitent.

*"Come, ye needy, come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify;
True belief, and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.*

*Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you ;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."*

VIII

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE"

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—John 6: 35.

OUR Saviour used expressions concerning himself which might be turned to another meaning than he intended. He did not guard his words by saying, "I am like bread, and faith is like eating and drinking"; but he said, "I am the bread of life"; and "except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood there is no life in him." He did this not only because from his own sincerity of heart it was not in him to be for ever fencing around all his speeches, but also with a set purpose, because his speech was so plain that if any man misunderstood him it would be the result of his own perversity of mind, and not the effect of any obscurity in the Lord's language. Thus by fixing a low and sensuous meaning upon elevated spiritual language the men of his time would be discovered to be none of the Lord's chosen, and the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed. While he was preaching, his words were like a refiner's fire, bringing out the pure metal, but separating it from the dross, and making that dross to appear the worthless thing which it really was. It would clearly appear that men hated the light when they perverted the clearest expressions of the Lord of light into foolishness or mystery.

He used this mode of speaking as a test: those who were his understood him; those who were not his and were not taught of the Father, viciously put a literal meaning upon his spiritual words, and so missed his divine teaching. To this day the memorable expressions of our Lord in this chapter remain a stumblingblock to some, while they are full of glorious instruction to others. We see the world every day parting more and more definitely into two camps, the camp of the chosen of God, to whom is made known the mystery of the Kingdom, the babes

in grace who read the simple teaching of the Gospel and rejoice in it; and on the other side the carnal host who hear the Word, but look no deeper than its outward letter, to whom it becomes a "savour of death unto death," because they pervert the Lord's spiritual word to a carnal meaning and straightway heap unto themselves abounding ceremonies, and pierce themselves through with deadly errors.

But now, speaking to those to whom the Lord has given to understand his meaning, let me say, our Saviour uses very simple figures. Think of his calling himself bread! How condescending, that the commonest article upon the table should be the fullest type of Christ! Think of his calling our faith an eating and a drinking of himself! Nothing could be more instructive; at the same time nothing could better set forth his gentleness and humility of spirit, that he does not object to speak thus of our receiving him. God be thanked for the simplicity of the Gospel. The longer I live the more I bless God that we have not received a classical gospel, or a mathematical gospel, or a metaphysical gospel; it is not a gospel confined to scholars and men of genius, but a poor man's Gospel, a ploughman's Gospel; for that is the kind of Gospel which we can live upon and die upon. It is to us not the luxury of refinement, but the staple food of life. We want no fine words when the heart is heavy, neither do we need deep problems when we are lying upon the verge of eternity, weak in body and tempted in mind. At such times we magnify the blessed simplicity of the Gospel. Jesus in the flesh made manifest becomes our soul's bread. Jesus bleeding on the cross, a substitute for sinners, is our soul's drink. This is the Gospel for babes, and strong men want no more.

With this as a preface, let us come to our subject. Our text in a very simple way tells us, first, that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS TO BE RECEIVED BY EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY FOR HIMSELF.

An unappropriated Christ is no Christ to any man. Bread which is not eaten, will not stay our hunger. The water in the cup may sparkle like purest crystal, but it cannot slake thirst unless we drink it. To get a personal hold of the Saviour, is the main thing, and the question is how is this to be done. How is Jesus Christ to become a Saviour to me? You will observe

that in this chapter, and indeed everywhere else, the mode of obtaining an interest in Christ is never mixed up with the idea of fitness, merit, preparation, or worth. The text saith, "He that cometh to me." It says nothing of preparation before coming, nor of any meritorious actions connected therewith; it is a simple coming, as a beggar for alms, or a child for its father's help. The other description is, "He that believeth on me." There is nothing there of merit; in fact, faith stands in direct opposition to meritorious working; and if we read of eating Christ, and drinking Christ, the act is entirely a receptive one, nothing given forth but everything received, reminding us of that memorable passage, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." It is all a matter of receiving, not of bringing to Christ. We come to him empty-handed, we believe in him without any deservings of our own, and in that way, and in that way only, Jesus Christ becomes our Saviour. Let us dwell on these expressions for a few minutes.

The first is, that *we come to him*. "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger." I suppose this represents the first act of faith, by which men enter into spiritual life: we are alienated from Christ, but after hearing the Gospel we are by the Holy Spirit led to think of him, to consider him, to study him, and to judge that he is the Saviour whom we want. Our alienation from him is turned into desire after him, and we come to him beseeching him to be our Saviour. We come to him. It is a motion of the heart towards him, not a motion of the feet, for many came to Jesus in body, and yet never came to him in truth; they were close to him in the press, but they never touched him so that virtue came out of him. The coming here meant is performed by desire, prayer, assent, consent, trust, obedience. It means that I hear what Christ is, and learn what God says he is; that he is God and that he is man, that he came into the world to take the sins of men upon himself and to be punished in their stead; I hear all this, and assent to it. I believe in Jesus, and I say, "If he died for all those who trust him, I will trust him; if he has offered so great a sacrifice upon the tree for guilty men, I will rely upon that sacrifice and make it the basis of my hope." That is coming to Jesus Christ.

Perhaps I may illustrate coming to Jesus by an incident

connected with the hymn which we sang just now. I think I have read somewhere that Mr. Wesley was one morning dressing: his window looked out towards the sea, and there was a heavy wind blowing, the waves were very boisterous, and the rain was falling heavily; just then a little bird, overtaken by the tempest, flew in at the open window and nestled in his bosom. Of course, he cherished it there, and then bade it go on its way when the storm was over. Impressed by the interesting occurrence, he sat down and wrote the verse—

*"Jesu lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide
Till the storm of life be past."*

Imitate that poor little bird if you would have Christ: fly away from the wrath of God, fly away from your own convictions of sin, fly away from your dark forebodings of judgment to come, right into the bosom of Jesus, which is warm with love to sinners.

The second description given us of the way in which Christ becomes ours, is by *believing on him*. Here again I have to explain a word which needs no explanation except one flash of light from the Holy Ghost. To believe on Christ means to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; but it includes far more than that. You may be very orthodox in your notions about Christ, in fact, you may believe what the Bible states about him, and yet you may not have saving faith in him. "He that believeth on me." What if I put the word "trusts" instead? "He that trusteth in me"; or he who leans all his weight on me; who, knowing such and such things to be true, acts as if they were true; and shows the reality of his belief by the simplicity of his reliance. Knowing that Christ came to save sinners, the believer says, "Then I depend upon him to save me": knowing that Jesus was the substitute for human guilt, he says, "He is the substitute for my guilt: if he came and took sin upon himself, then I trust him, and therefore know that he took my sin, that he 'bore, that I

might never bear, his Father's righteous ire.'" And is Christ really a man's Saviour the moment he believes? Yes, the moment he believes. But suppose his former life has been scandalous? It is forgiven him for Christ's name sake. But suppose that the moment before he so trusted Christ there was no good thing in him whatever? Jesus Christ died for the ungodly, and he is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." But suppose he should be imperfect afterwards? It is no supposition, he will be so; but "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Faith is an act of reliance upon Christ's great sacrifice, and wherever the Holy Ghost works it in men it makes Christ to be theirs, so that they shall never hunger and shall never thirst.

But I pass on to the third way in which we are said to receive Christ. It is not in the text in so many words, but we must consider it because, though not there literally, it is there spiritually. It is *eating and drinking*. We are to eat Christ and drink Christ. Oh, it is monstrous, it is monstrous that out of Bedlam there should live men who should dream that Jesus taught us literally to eat his flesh and to drink his blood! What greater crime could there be than for men literally to eat the flesh of their own Saviour? I cannot speak too strongly against so extraordinary, so monstrous a perversion of the teaching of our Lord.

What he meant by our eating his flesh and blood is just this—we believingly receive him into our hearts, and our minds feed upon him. We hear of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and as the Substitute for sinners: we believe it, and so receive the truth as men receive bread into the mouth. Now, in eating we first put the food into our mouths. As a whole it goes into the mouth, and even thus, as a whole, Christ Jesus is received into our belief and trust. The food being in the mouth, we proceed to masticate it; it is broken up, it is dissolved, our taste finds out its secret essence and flavour; and even in this way the believing mind thinks of Jesus, contemplates him, meditates upon him, and discovers his preciousness. We see far more of our Lord after conversion than we did at first. We have believed in him, knowing but little of him: but by-and-by we compre-

hend with all the saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Jesus becomes more comforting, and more delightful, as we comprehend more clearly who and what he is; our faith, which we placed implicitly upon him, now sees a thousand reasons for a yet fuller confidence, and so is strengthened. For instance, the ordinary believer believes in Jesus Christ because he is a divine Saviour; but the instructed believer sees in Jesus Christ fitness, fulness, variety of office, glory of character, completeness of work, immutability, and a thousand other things, which endear him. In this way the truth concerning the Lord is, as it were, masticated and enjoyed. But the process of eating goes further: the food descends into the inward parts to be digested, and there is a further breaking up and dissolving of it. So the great truths of incarnation and sacrifice are made to dwell in the memory, to lie upon the heart, to rest in the affections, till their essence, comfort, and force are fully drawn forth. Oh, it is beyond degree refreshing to let these grand truths dwell in us richly, to be inwardly digested!

Have you ever chewed the cud with the truths of the Gospel, turning them over, and over, and over again as delicious morsels for your spiritual taste? Can you say with David, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God"? If so you know what spiritual eating is. When that is done the food is next assimilated and taken into the substance of the body; it passes from the digesting organs to those which assimilate it. Each portion of the body draws forth its own proper nutriment from the food, and so the whole man is built up. It is just so with the great truths, that Christ became man and died in man's stead; these are inwardly received by us till our whole nature draws from them a satisfying and strengthening influence: by a sort of mystic sympathy, the truth being fitted to the mind and the mind requiring just such truth, our whole nature drinks in Christ; and his person and work become our mind's joy, delight, strength, and life. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, and therefore our thoughts of Jesus, and faith in him, build us up into him in all things.

Now, as a man who has feasted well, and is no more hungry, rises from the table satisfied, so we feel that in Jesus our entire nature has all that it wants. Christ is all, and we are filled in

him, complete in him. This is to receive Christ. Now, beloved, if you want to have Christ altogether your own you must receive him by this process. Merely to trust him gives you Christ as food in your mouth; to contemplate, to meditate, to commune with him, this is to understand him, even as food is digested and is ours; further prayer and fellowship and meditation, assimilate Christ so that he becomes part and parcel of our very selves; Christ lives in us, and we in him.

We ought not to forget as we are dwelling upon this, that the two points about Jesus Christ, which he says are to us meat and drink, are his flesh and his blood. We understand by his flesh, his humanity; our soul feeds upon the literal, real, historical fact, that, "God was in Christ." That "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and men beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. My soul's main comfort to-day is not a doctrine. I get a great deal of comfort out of many doctrines, but the bottom comfort of my soul is not a doctrine but a fact, and it is this fact, that he who made the heavens and the earth, and without whom was not anything made that was made, was born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, and for thirty years and more did actually, not in fiction or romance, but in very deed, dwell as a man among men. That fact is my soul's food. The historical fact that Christ Jesus was flesh and blood, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, a man like ourselves: this I say is nourishment to our spirits, and believing it we feel a joy unutterable, for we know that he who sits upon the throne of God is a man. Man was made "a little lower than the angels," but now in the person of Christ he is crowned with glory and honour. We now know that God cannot hate manhood, because Christ is a man. Christ has reconciled God to manhood because he represented manhood, and the thoughts of God towards man are, for Christ's sake, thoughts of love and not of evil.

The other point in which Jesus is food to our mind is his blood. This most clearly refers to his sufferings and to his vicarious death. Bread and wine are put upon the communion table as separate symbols; not bread and wine mixed together, that would destroy the teaching. The wine is distinct from the bread, because when the blood is separated from the flesh there is before you the sure evidence of death. Now the true

drink of a thirsty sinner is the fact that Christ died in his stead. I will repeat what I said: my great hope as a sinner does not lie in a doctrine, and my consolation as a trembling criminal before the bar of God is not founded in any opinion or doctrinal statement, but in a fact. He who is very God of very God, did hang upon a cross of wood, upon the little mount of Calvary just outside the gates of Jerusalem, and there in agonies unutterable beneath the wrath of God made expiation for the sins of all who believe in him. There is my hope; there is yours, my brother. Yes, there is all our hope. Very well, then; do you not see that the way to obtain the benefits of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to believe in his being God and man, to believe in his dying as the God-man, and to rest upon this, and to contemplate this, and to turn to it again and again and again, so that, having marked and learned, you may also inwardly digest those unspeakably glorious mysteries of incarnation and of sacrifice?

I have set the Gospel before you now, for if any man among you will do this, Christ is yours. Here is Christ to be had for nothing, Christ to be had simply by trusting him, by coming to him. As the vessel obtains its fulness by its emptiness being placed under the flowing stream, as the beggar's wants are relieved by putting out his empty hand to accept an alms, so you are to obtain Christ by coming to him as empty sinners. He is given to you for nothing, freely given to you of God, and whosoever will may have him; and if you have him not, it is not because *he* has rejected you, for he has never rejected one that has come to him, but because *you* have rejected him.

The second part of our subject is this. WHERE JESUS IS RECEIVED HE IS SUPREMELY SATISFYING. He is supremely satisfying, mark you, to our highest and deepest wants, not to mere fancies and whims. Christ compares the wants of men to hungering and thirsting. Now hungering is no sham. Those who have ever felt it know what a real want it indicates, and what bitter pangs it brings. Thirst also is not a sentimental matter; it is a trial indeed. What pain can be worse beneath the skies than thirst? Now Jesus has come to meet the deep, real, pressing, vital wants and pains of your nature. Your fear of hell, your terror of death, your sense of sin, all these Jesus has come to meet, and all these he does meet in the case

of all who come to him, as every one who has tried him will bear witness.

Jesus Christ meets the hungering of conscience. Every man with an awakened conscience feels that God must punish him for sin; but as soon as he perceives that the Son of God was punished instead of him, his conscience is perfectly appeased, and will never hunger again. Until men know the truth of the substitution of Jesus you may preach to them what you will, and they may go through all the sacraments, and they may suffer many bodily mortifications, but their conscience will hunger still. My God whom I offended became a man, and for my sake he suffered what I ought to have suffered; therefore my conscience rests gratefully contented with so divinely gracious a way of satisfying justice.

Men when once awakened have a hunger of fear. They look forward to the future, and they scarcely know why, but they feel a dread of something undefinable, but full of terror; and especially if they are near to die, horror takes hold upon them, for they know not what is yet to come; but when they find that Jesus Christ, who is God, became man, and died for men, that whosoever trusts him might be saved, then fear expires, and love takes its place. The dove in the cleft of the rock feels no more rude alarms. Terror cannot live beneath the cross, for there hope reigns supreme. Nor shall fear ever return, for the work of Jesus is finished, and, therefore, no hiding place for fear is left.

The heart also has its hunger, for almost unknown to itself it cries, "O that some one loved me, and that I could love some one whose love would fill my nature to the brim." Men's hearts are gluttons after love, yea, like death and the grave they are insatiable. They hunt hither and thither, but are bitterly disappointed; for earth holds not an object worthy of all the love of a human heart: but when they hear that Jesus Christ loved them before the world was, and died for them, their roving affections find rest. Like as Ruth found rest in the house of a husband, so do we come to peace in Jesus. In the love of the Father and the Son we dwell in sweet content, hungering and thirsting no more.

Then there are vast *desires* in us all, and when we are quickened those desires expand and enlarge. Man feels that he

is not in his element, and is not what he was intended to be. He is like a bird in the shell, he feels a life within him too great to be for ever confined within such narrow bounds. Do you not feel great longings? Does not your soul seethe with high ambitions? Our immortal nature frets beneath the burden of mortality, its spiritual nature is weary of the chains of materialism. That hungering will never be hushed into content till we receive Christ; but when we have him we learn that we are the sons of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and that it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This opens up before us a splendid future of glory unfading, and bliss unbounded, and we feel that we want no more. Since we are Christ's and Christ is God's, all things are ours, and our hunger is over for ever.

This perfect satisfying of our nature is to be found nowhere else but in Christ. Some have tried to be satisfied with themselves and their own doings. They have despised the bread of heaven, for they dreamed that they could live without bread; they would be self-contained men, they would make themselves happy with themselves; but it is a wretched failure. The poor Bushmen, when they have nothing to eat; tie a girdle around them, and call it the hunger belt, and when they have gone a few days they pull it tighter still, and tighter still, in order to enable them to bear hunger: so any man who has to live upon himself, will have to draw the hunger belt very tight indeed. A soul cannot be persuaded by philosophy to content itself without its necessary food: eloquence may try all its charms to that end, but it will be in vain. Who can convince a hungry man that he need not eat? Some have gone to Moses for bread, and, mark you, the two greatest bread-givers in the world are Moses and Christ. Moses fed the tribes in the wilderness for forty years, and Jesus always feeds his people. But Moses' bread never satisfies, those who eat it ere long call it light bread; and if they have been satisfied with it for a time, yet there is the mournful reflection that their fathers did eat it and are dead. There is no life in the bread of the law; but he who gets Christ has a bread whereof he shall eat for ever and ever, and shall never die.

Some have tried to stay their hunger by the narcotics of

scepticism, and have dosed themselves into torpor; and others have endeavoured to get ease through the drugs of fatalism. Many stave off hunger by indifference, like the bears in winter, which are not hungry because they are asleep. Such persons come to the house of God asleep. They would not like to be aroused, for if they were to do so they would wake up to an awful hunger. I wish they could be awakened, for that hunger which they dread would drive them to a soul-satisfying Saviour. But, depend upon it, the only way to meet hunger is to get bread, and the only way to meet your soul's want is to get Christ, in whom there is enough and to spare, but nowhere else.

All believers bear witness that Jesus Christ is satisfying bread to them. When do you get most satisfied on a Sunday, beloved? I do not know whom you may happen to hear, but what Sabbath days are the best to you? I will tell you when I enjoy a Sunday most—when I preach Christ most, or when I can sit and hear a humble village preacher exalt the Lord Jesus. It does not matter if the grammar is spoilt so long as Jesus is there. What some call platitudes are dainties to me if they glorify my Lord Jesus Christ. Anything about him is satisfying to a renewed spirit—cannot you bear witness to that? Sometimes when I have preached up Jesus Christ—and I think I generally do so, for the fact is I do not know anything but him, and I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified—I know you go away and say, “After all, that is what we want—Christ crucified, Christ the sinner's substitutionary sacrifice, no sham Christ, no mere talk about Christ as an example, but his flesh and blood, a dying, bleeding, suffering Christ: that is what we want.” Now I have the witness of every Christian here to that! You are never satisfied with anything but that—are you? No matter how cleverly the doctrine might be analysed, or however orthodox it might be, you cannot be content with it, you must have the person of Christ, the flesh and the blood of Christ, or else you are not content.

And those who have once eaten and drunk Christ never seek additional ground of trust beyond Christ; they never say, “I am resting upon Christ, but still I should like to be able to depend a little on my baptism.” I never heard a Christian talk in that fashion in my life. I never heard a man say, “I

rest in the blood of Jesus, but still I wish that I could have a bishop's hands put upon my head, so as to give me a confirmation of my faith." I never heard that in my life, and I do not expect I ever shall. We are perfectly satisfied without priests, and without sacraments; Jesus Christ is the one sole foundation upon which we build. Again, I have never found those who rest in Christ wanting to shift their confidence. Those who want something new every Sunday are those who know not the Saviour. Truly, if you have not the bread from heaven, you may well cry out for all manner of dishes, for each one will soon cloy; but if you have the bread of heaven, you want Christ on the first of January and every day till the last of December. I have never heard a Christian assert that Christ did not satisfy them in the days of sickness, and in the hour of death.

I came to you this morning fresh from the sick bed of a venerable Christian man, close upon his eightieth year of age, and I said to him, "Now, dear sir, here are three or four young people around your bed: we are going forth on our pilgrimage relying on Christ, believing that he is faithful and true; you have gone a great deal further than we have; will you, therefore, kindly undeceive us if we are under a mistake. Have you found that the Lord has not fulfilled his word, have you found that he has not been true?" It was a blessed sight to see the man of God and hear him say, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised," and then he added, "I will sing of mercy, for it has been mercy, all mercy, all the way through." "Do you feel any fear about departure?" I said to him. "Oh! dear, no," he said; "I am willing to wait, or willing to go; but I am full of the expectation of beholding him who loved me and gave himself for me."

Ah! the bridge of grace will bear your weight, brother. Thousands of big sinners have gone across that bridge, yea, tens of thousands have gone over it. I can hear their trampings now as they traverse the great arches of the bridge of salvation. They come by their thousands, by their myriads, e'er since the day when Christ first entered into his glory, they come, and yet never a stone has sprung in that mighty bridge. Some have been the chief of sinners, and some have come at the very last of their days, but the arch has never yielded beneath their

weight. I will go with them trusting to the same support, it will bear me over as it has borne them. They who have eaten Christ and drunk Christ, shall not hunger or thirst in their last hour, trying as it will be. Saints have died saying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

IX

"I AM THE DOOR"

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."—John 10:9.

THE Word of God tells us that in the midst of the great mass of men there are to be found a special people—a people who were chosen of God out of the common race before the stars began to shine, a people who were dear to God's heart before the foundation of the world, a people who were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus beyond and above the rest of mankind, a people who are the especial property of Christ, the flock of his pasture, the sheep of his hand, a people over whom providence watches, shaping their course amid the tangled maze of life, a people who are to be produced at the last, every one of them faultless before the eternal throne, and fitted for the exalted destiny which, in the ages to come, he shall reveal.

All through Scripture you read about this particular and special people. Sometimes they are called "a seed", at other times "a garden", at other times "a treasure", and sometimes, as in the chapter we have read, "a flock." The common name in the New Testament for them is "the Church", "the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

Now, the all-important question is, how can we obtain admission into this Church? Where is this community to be found? Who are the members of it? What is the way to become a partaker of the privileges which belong to it?

First, HOW A MAN CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF THAT CHURCH WHICH IS ELECTED, REDEEMED, AND WILL BE SAVED, IS SIMPLY AND BRIEFLY SOLVED BY OUR LORD'S FIRST ASSERTION.

Christ tells us that *the only way to enter the Church is through himself*. He is the door, the only door. There is no other mode

of admission into the Church but through himself. Let it be understood, then, once for all, that *we cannot get into the Church of Christ through baptism*. There are tens of thousands—there have been millions—who have been baptized after a fashion, that is to say, they have been sprinkled, and thousands have been immersed, who never were admitted into the Church of Christ. In consideration of the ordinance as it was administered to them, with or more commonly without their consent, they were recognised by some persons as being Christians; but let me tell you that, unless they came to Christ by true faith, they are nothing better than baptized pagans, they are sprinkled heathen still. Why, you might hold a man in an everlasting shower, but you could not make him “a member of Christ” thereby; or you might drag him through the Atlantic Ocean, and if he survived the immersion, yet still he would not be one jot the better. The door is not baptism, but Christ. If thou believest in Christ, thou art a member of his Church. If thy trust is stayed upon Christ, who is God’s great way of salvation, thou hast evidence that thou wast chosen of him from before the foundation of the world; and that faith of thine entitles thee to all the privileges which Christ has promised in his Word to believers.

If Christ be the door, then it follows that *men do not get into the Church by birthright*. The Society of Friends has been one of the most useful communities in the world, and it has maintained a good testimony upon most important points for many years; but it seems to me that that which has done them most mischief, is the admission of birthright membership. Do they not receive into their fellowship the children of their members as though they were necessarily proper persons to be received into the visible Church? My brethren, it is a great privilege to have Christian parents; it may prove a very great advantage if you use it rightly; but it involves a great responsibility, and if you use it wrongly, instead of being a blessing to you, it may be a fearful curse. Though you may be one of a long line of saints, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The most pious example, the most godly training, cannot ensure conversion; and without conversion, depend upon it, you cannot be Christ’s. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Through our not practising infant baptism, we do not

so readily fall into this error as some denominations ; still, it is necessary to say even here that you have no right to gospel privileges because of your mothers and fathers. You *must* yourselves be born again. You have no right to the covenant of grace, nor to the blessings or promises thereof, except as by your own personal and individual faith you come to Christ. It is not your father nor your mother who can be the door into Christ's Church for you, but Christ himself. "I," saith he, "I am the door." If you are in Christ, you are in his Church. If you have laid hold on him, you are a member of that secret and invisible community of his elect and his redeemed ; but it is not by baptism, nor yet by birthright, that you can ever be so.

Moreover, as Christ is the door, it is evident that *a man does not come to be a member of the Church of Christ by making a profession of being so*. He may prove himself to be a detestable hypocrite, but he cannot prove himself to be a genuine Christian by mere profession. Men do not get rich in this world by a lavish expenditure, or by a profession of being wealthy. They must hold the title-deeds of their estate, and have the cash in the strong box, or else they are poor, in spite of all their pretensions. And you cannot become a Christian by coming forward, and asking to be admitted into the Church, declaring that you believe, and avowing that you repent. No, verily, but you must repent truly, or you shall perish ; you must believe truly, or you shall have no part or lot in this matter. The mere saying "Yes, yes, I am willing to profess this, I am willing to say that," no more makes you a Christian than it would make cotton to be silk to call it so, or make mud to be gold by labelling it with that title. Beware of a false profession, for it is doubly hazardous. The man who has no grace is in danger, but the man who makes a profession of having it when he has not, is in double danger, for he is the least likely to be awakened, and he is certain, unless sovereign grace prevent, to make his profession a pillow for his wicked and slumbering head, till he sleeps himself into hell.

Further, and this may, perhaps, touch the point more closely still, *a man does not get to be one of the Lord's people, or to be one of Christ's sheep, by being admitted into any visible church*. He ought not to try to get into any visible church until he is in the true Church. He has no right to join the external organisation until he has first got into the secret conclave by a living faith in Christ.

If he leaves the door alone, and climbs over the wall, and comes into the outward church without being a believer in Christ, so far from being saved, Christ will say to him, "Thou art a thief and a robber, for thou hast climbed up some other way, and thou camest not in by the door." I believe we do rightly to subject the admission of members to the voice of all the church; I believe we do rightly to examine candidates to see whether they make a creditable profession, and whether they know what they are doing. But our examination,—oh, 'tis nothing better than skin deep. We cannot search the heart, and the best judgement of never so many Christian men, though honest, and deserving to be treated with great respect, would be a very poor thing to rest upon. If you have not Christ, your church certificates are waste paper, and your membership with any people, however pure and apostolic they may be, is but a name to live while you are dead, for the only way, the sole way, of getting into the real, vital, living Church of Christ is by coming to Christ who is himself the door.

The plain English of this metaphor, then, is just this,—*to be one of God's people, the essential thing is a simple dependence upon Jesus Christ.* If you have not this, no matter who baptizes you, or who gives you the consecrated bread and wine, or who maudles to you about a hope of salvation for which there is no warrant, you will die in your sins, notwithstanding all your sacraments, except you come to Christ.

Mark you, simple faith, where it is genuine, makes it plain that you do enter by Christ the door, because such *faith leads to obedience.* How canst thou suppose that thou art a member of his Church if thou art not obedient to Christ? It is necessary that the man who trusts Christ should become the servant of Christ. Real faith never kicks at this rule, but rather delights in it. "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments." Except we do keep Christ's commandments out of a principle of love to him, our religion is vain. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We may talk as we will about inward experiences and believings, but "by their fruits ye shall know them." The spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness. When Christ comes into the soul, all iniquity must be purged out of the soul. You know how Malachi describes his advent. He proclaims to us the promise that the Lord whom we seek shall suddenly come

to his temple : that is, seekers shall be finders ; do you know what he adds? "But who may abide the day of his coming? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." Now, the refiner's fire burns up the dross, and fullers' soap takes out the stains ; and so, if Christ be in you, you will pass through a refining that will burn up your outward sin, and you will be subjected to a washing like that of the fullers' soap, which will cleanse you from all your iniquities.

Now, if it be so, that Christ is the door into the Church, and if we have entered the Church through that door, *it does not signify much to us what the Pope at Rome thinks of us*. He may excommunicate us. This he is very fond of doing, but does it matter? It signifies not one jot, if I am a new creature in Christ Jesus, how much the Pope may rail at me. Besides, there are plenty nowadays who are saying, "You Nonconformists are only a pack of heretics ; *we* have the Apostolical succession ; *we* have the sacraments and the priests." Ah ! they vaunt themselves as being "Catholic", though their claim is disallowed alike by the Babylon which is here below, and by the Jerusalem which is above. Let them vaunt if they will. As long as we have Christ, they may keep their apostolical succession.

I like that story of the Sandwich Islanders who had been converted through some of our missionaries, and the Gospel had been preached to them for years. At last, two or three gentlemen in long black gowns landed there, and the people asked them what they had come for. They said they were come to instruct them in the true faith, and to teach them. Well, they said, they should be glad to hear it. If their teaching was true, and like the Scriptures, they would listen to them. By-and-by, a little diagram was exhibited to the natives after the similitude of a tree. This tree had many branches. The twigs which were farthest off were the different saints, the believers, those who do good works ; then the limbs, which were a little larger, were the priests ; the bigger boughs were bishops ; the biggest boughs were the cardinals ; and, at last, these all joined on to the trunk, which was the Pope, and that went all the way down to the bottom, till it came to Peter, who was the root, deriving his authority immediately from Christ. So the natives asked about all these twigs, and branches, and specially about certain rotten branches that were tumbling off into a fire. What were they? They were

Luther, and Calvin, and other heretics who had been cut off from the true tree of the church. "Well," said one of the islanders, "and pray what is the root of the tree?" Of course, that was allowed to be Jesus Christ. So they clapped their hands at once for joy, and said, "Never mind about the branches, and stems, and twigs; we have never heard of them, but we have got the root, and that will do to grow on."

Before I leave this point, a question suggests itself,—*Have we all entered by the door?* We are agreed that Christ is the door, have we entered by the door? You who are growing old—I always feel much pleasure in seeing grey heads, the type of mellowed years, in the concourse of worshippers—have you all believed in Jesus? You know the truth, you would not like to hear anything but the simple Gospel preached; but have you laid hold on the Gospel? A man may starve with bread upon the table if he does not eat, and he may perish with thirst, though he be up to his neck in water, if he does not drink. Have you trusted Christ? If not, how can you remain in a state of unbelief, for "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"?

Men and women in middle life, struggling with the cares of business, have *you* trusted in Christ? I know your thoughts are much taken up, and necessarily so, with the world; but have you not time to think upon this question, or dare you neglect it, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" If not, O man, thy life hangs on a thread, and that snapped, thy ruin is certain! And, oh, you young people, what a mercy it is to see you willing to come and hear the Word! But have you all heard it with your inward ears? Have you looked to my Master? Oh, it is sweet to come to Christ in the early morning of life to have a long day of happiness before you! May it be the blessedness of each one of you! It is vain to look at the door unless you enter. God give you grace to come in, if you never have entered before!

Secondly, Our Lord and Master tells us WHAT ARE THE PRIVILEGES OF ENTERING THROUGH HIM, THE DOOR.

The man who enters by Christ *shall be saved, he shall go in and out, and he shall find pasture. He shall be saved.* The man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved; he is saved, and he shall be saved. A man has by accident killed his fellow-man. The

next of kin to the murdered man will be sure to kill the man-slayer out of revenge, if he can get at him. Therefore the poor homicide takes flight as quickly as he can towards the city of refuge. How his heart beats, how his footsteps bound, how he flies with all his might! There is a handpost with the word "Refuge" upon it, and on he continues his way. But, presently, while he is running, he turns his head, and finds that the avenger of blood is after him. He sees that he is gaining upon him, he feels that he will probably overtake him. Oh, how he picks his steps lest he should trip against a stone, how he skims the ground, swift as a roe! He runs until he can see the city gates. "That is the fair CITY OF REFUGE," saith he. But he does not rest then, for a sight of the city will not secure him, so he quickens his speed, as if he would outstrip the wind, till he shoots through the archway and he is in the broad street of the city. Now he stops. Now he breathes. Now he wipes the hot sweat from his brow. "Now I am safe," saith he, "for no avenger of blood dares cross that threshold; he that once escapes here is delivered." So with the sinner when sin pursues him, when he discovers that he has offended God. He hears the furious coursers of divine vengeance coming on swiftly behind him, and his conscience flies, and his soul speeds towards the cross. He gets little hope. He hears of a Saviour; but that is not enough. He will never rest, he will never say he is at peace, until he has passed the gate of faith, and can say, "Now I do believe that Jesus died for me."

He that enters in by the door shall be saved. Noah's ark was built in the olden times to preserve Noah and his family from the great flood. It could not be said that Noah was saved till he had passed through the door; but when he had done that, a divine hand, quite unseen, shut the door; and as Noah heard it fastened, and understood that the Lord had shut him in, he felt quite safe. If God shuts us in, the floods from beneath cannot drown us, and the rains from above cannot penetrate to injure us. He must be safe whom God shuts in. The moment that a poor sinner trusts in Christ, God shuts the door. There he is, and there he shall be, till time shall be no more. He is secure.

I read a story, the other day, of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages

were ten or a dozen miles from each other, the wolves were out, the horses were rushing forward madly, the travellers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them; and though the horse tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were close behind, and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road, and to shut-to the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof, they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut, they could hear them gnawing at the door, and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises; but the travellers were safe, because they had entered in by the door, and the door was shut.

Now, when a man is in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him; and his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction. But he has got in to Christ, and that is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not start a single beam of that eternal refuge; it must stand fast, though earth and heaven should pass away. Now, to every man and woman Christ says that, if they have entered in by that door, they shall be saved. Do not have any doubt about it. Do not let anybody raise the question whether you may be or you may not be, you shall be. Oh, clutch at that blessed "shall."

Sir, if you have been a drunkard, yet, if you trust in Christ, you shall be saved. You shall not go back to your old drunkenness, but you shall be saved from it, if you believe in him. O woman, if thou hast stained thy character to the worst, yet, if thou believest in Christ, none of thy old sins shall ruin thee, but thou shalt be saved. Ah! though you be tempted every day of your lives, tempted as none ever were before, yet God is true, and cannot lie—if you come through Christ the door, you shall be saved. Do you understand what it is to come through the door? It is to depend upon Jesus, to give yourselves to him, to rest on him. When you hang up your jugs and mugs on the nail in the cupboard, what keeps them from falling? Nothing but the nail; and if that holds well, nothing can fall that hangs on it. Now, you must trust in Christ as the vessel hangs on the nail, and if you do so, he is fastened as a nail in a sure place, and you cannot and shall not perish.

He that entereth in by the door "*shall go in.*" The man who

believes in Christ shall go into rest and peace, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He shall go in to secret knowledge. He shall become a scholar, and shall be taught by Christ as his Rabbi. He shall go in unto God with holy boldness in prayer. He shall go in unto that which is within the veil, and speak to God from before the mercy-seat. He shall go in unto the child's place and shall stand as an adopted heir of heaven. He shall go in unto close communion with God. He shall speak with his Maker. The Lord shall lift up the light of his countenance upon him. He shall go in unto the highest attainment in spiritual things. He shall go in to the treasure-house of the covenant, and say, "All this is mine." He shall go in to the storehouse of the promises, and take whatsoever his soul needeth.

He that enters in by the door shall be saved, and he shall go in. If you know what this means, go in ; go in farther ; go in more constantly. Do not stop where you are, but go in till you have got a little more. If you love Christ, come nearer to him, and nearer, and nearer still. But if you want to get into anything that is divine, you must get in through Christ. O you who open your Bibles, and want to understand a text, the way to get into the meaning of a text is through the door, Christ! O you who want to get more holiness, come through the door ; the way to holiness is not through Moses, but through Christ! O you who would have closer communion with your heavenly Father, the way to come in is not through your own efforts, but through Christ! You came to Christ at first to get salvation ; you must come to Christ still to get sanctification.

The next privilege is that *he shall go out*. Putting the two together—"he shall go in and out,"—they signify liberty. The Christian does not come into the Church as into a prison, but he comes in as a free man, walking in and out of his own house. But what does it mean to go out? I think it means this. The men that trust in Christ go out to their daily business through Christ, the door. I wonder how many of you ever thought of this? You know sometimes you get up, put on your clothes, and go blundering out to work, and then you find yourselves very weak all day. Well, I do not wonder at it, for you do not go out through Christ, the door. Suppose you had given yourselves to Christ for the day, and though you had time but for a few minutes'

prayer, yet you had it thus, "Lord, I am thine; take care of me to-day; I am going out where there will be many to tempt me and try me. I do not know what may happen, but, Lord, I am going out in thy name, and resting in thy strength; if there is anything that I can do for thee, I desire to do it. If there is anything to suffer, I wish to suffer it for thy sake, but take care of me, Lord. I will not go out and face my fellow-men until I have seen thy face, and I do not want to speak to them until I have spoken to thee, nor to hear what they have to say till I have heard what God the Lord will speak." Depend upon it, it is blessed going out when you go thus through the door.

May not this going out also mean to go out to suffering? You and I are called sometimes to bear great bodily pain, or losses, or bereavements. Well now, what a sweet thing it is to go out to suffer these things through the door, and to be able to say, "Now, my Master, this is a cross, but I will carry it, not in my own strength, but in thine. Do what thou wilt with me; I shall drink the cup because thou appointest it." Whenever you can see Christ's hand in it, it makes the bitter sweet, and heavy things soon grow light. Go to your sick-bed as you hope to go to your dying-bed, through the door, that is, through Christ.

And when, as sometimes happens, we have to go out, as it were, away from fellowship with Christ, to fight with our inward sins, the right way is to go out to resist them through the door. If you ever try to fight with sin in your own strength, or on a legal footing, or because you feel that you will be condemned if you do not overcome those sins, you will be as weak as water. The way of victory is through the blood of the Lamb. When once the blood of Christ comes into contact with the besetting sin, that sin withers straight away.

And so, beloved, we ought, in all that we do for the Lord, to go out through the door. It is always sweet preaching for me when I feel that I come forth in the name of my Master, when I do not come to tell you what ideas I have woven out of my own brains, nor to put attractive figures before you, as I would like to do sometimes; but, rather, when I come to tell you just what my Lord would have you know, telling it as a message to you from our God, and cherishing in my own heart his great love toward perishing sinners. Then, indeed, to minister is joy. You Sunday-school teachers will always teach well when you

go down to the schoolroom through the door, that is, having been with Christ, having sought and enjoyed his company. I know you who are teaching larger classes, you who are engaged in instructing or exhorting, you who go about any holy work, you always do it well when you have God's smile upon you in the doing of it; and you shall have great success in the doing of it if you always go to it through Christ, the door; if you serve Christ through Christ, and do it, not only for him, but through him and by him. Our own strength is perfect weakness, but the strength which comes through simple dependence upon the ever-living Christ, who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," this is the strength which wins the conquest. God give you grace not only to go in, but also to go out through the door.

The last privilege named in the text is, "*and shall find pasture.*" I suppose this is what you come here for, you who love the Lord, you come here for pasture. It is a great blessing if, when we come to hear the Gospel, it becomes real pasture to us. We do know some who say that the troubles of the week become unbearable because they have such barren Sabbaths. Ah, if you are members of a church that is rent with discord, where the ministry abounds in anything but Christ, you will soon begin to cry out, and you will value the privilege of hearing Jesus Christ lifted up among you. But who are the people who get the pasture where Jesus Christ is preached? Not all who hear of him, nor yet all believers; there are times when you may hear a sermon that is of no use to you, and yet your brother or sister by your side may be greatly instructed and comforted thereby. In such a case, I should not wonder if it was because your friend came in to the service through the door, and you did not.

Do you remember the story of Mr. Erskine and the good lady who went to hear him preach at the communion? It was such sweet preaching, she thought she had never heard the like. So, after service, she asked who the gentleman was that had preached; and, on being told that it was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, she said, "I will come and hear him again next Sabbath morning." She went, she listened, and she thought to herself, "Well, this is very dry, very heavy preaching." She was not at all comforted by it; then, like a foolish woman, as I should think she must have been, she went into the vestry, and

said, "Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you last Sabbath with much pleasure, sir; I never was so edified; and I came again this morning, but I have been dreadfully disappointed." So the good man said, very calmly, "Pray, madam, when you came to the kirk last Sabbath, what did you come for?" She said, "I came to communion, sir." "To have fellowship with Christ, I suppose?" he asked. "Yes, sir." "Well, you came for it, and you had it. And pray, what did you come here this morning for?" Said she, "I came to hear you, sir." "And you had it, woman," said he, "you had it, and you had not anything else, because you did not come for anything more than that."

Well now, when people come merely to hear a minister, or for custom's sake, or for form's sake, do they not always get what they come for? If people come to find fault, we always give them plenty of our imperfections to be entertained with, so they need not be disappointed. If others come merely out of custom, they say, "Well, this is my work, I have performed my duty." Of course it is, but if you had come in through the door, that is, looking to Christ, looking for Christ, desiring not to see the preacher, but the Lord, not to get the word of man, but the Word of God, as food for your soul, I believe you would have found pasture. Brethren, the sheep want pasture. No other food will suit them. So your soul wants heavenly truth, and if you come to the house of God through Christ, you will get it. If you turn to the Bible through Christ, you will find it a rich storehouse. If you come to prayer through the door of Christ, you will find it comforting, and so you shall find pasture.

I think the text may mean, that he who rests in Christ shall have all his wants supplied. If this text does not mean so, another does, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Some of you are very poor, but if you have trusted in Christ, you may plead this promise, "Thou hast said that I shall find pasture. Thy Word declares that 'no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Lord, make this true to me."

X

"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD"

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John 10: 11.

THESE words were spoken when our Lord was amongst his own people. Perhaps as you hear them there comes a whisper in your soul, "I wonder whether that is true now? If the Lord Jesus in his flesh were here at this moment, in the midst of us, and if he said, 'I am the good shepherd,' we might find it easy to believe it; but he has gone. What assurance have we that it is the same now, when he is no longer among us?" I answer, "Dear brethren, we know it is true because Jesus Christ is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'; that in itself were enough, but we have the added assurance that in this place he meant to say it was so, for, if you notice, he was evidently looking to the future when he said, 'I am,' seeing that he added, 'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,' when as yet he had not done it. There was an interval between the time when he said these words and the laying down of his life upon the cross. As he went on further in his discourse and said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd,' he was looking to the future you see. It was as if he had said, 'I am the good shepherd, and I am going to gather in the wandering people that, as yet, are not of my flock'; so that, evidently, the meaning and force of the '*I am*' runs right on till he has gathered in all the other sheep that were not, when he spake the word, included in his fold. Yes, he means you to understand that he is speaking these same words as much to you as to Peter and James and John. To you he is saying, 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'"

First, then, I say, let us look at CHRIST'S CLAIM. "I am the good shepherd." He means us to understand three things. It

is as if he said, "I am a shepherd," and then, "I am a *good* shepherd," and, last of all, "I am *the* good shepherd"—that good shepherd who is spoken of in the Old Testament.

"I am a shepherd," he says, first; that is to say, *he stands in the same relationship to his people as a shepherd does to his flock*. He owns his people: they every one of them belong to him. He prizes them because they are his—sets a value upon every one of them. He takes care of them, remembering them both night and day, His heart is never off them; and because of his inward love there is an outward goodness which he constantly extends to them. He protects them from the wolf: he guards them from a thousand dangers: he sees to the supply of all their wants. He guides them in the right way: he brings them back when they wander: he strengthens them when they are weak: he carries them when they are too feeble to go. He sees that they are a weak flock, and a silly flock, and a wandering flock: therefore is he their strength, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all.

No creature, perhaps, has more diseases than a sheep, except a man. No creature is more dependent upon another and higher creature than a sheep is, for it seems only half itself till it is under the care of man. And none of us, brethren, can be said to be less dependent than the sheep are, for we are not true men till we get near to Christ. We are without life and without strength, till we find life and strength in him. As a sheep would be sure to wander, and, wandering, would be very likely to wander into a desert—would be sure not to better itself—would be certain in the end to come to naught—so is it with us. Without him who is our shepherd we should wander farther and farther into misery and sin, and our ruin would be certain. We are more dependent upon Christ than sheep are upon the shepherd. You see, then, why Christ says, "I am a shepherd."

But he is not only a shepherd, he is a good shepherd, for *what he does he does well*. Never does he neglect his flock; not one ever perished because he forgot it. Since he never forgets, not one ever perished at all. He is a good shepherd, because all that ought to be done—all that can be done—all that may be wished to be done towards his sheep—he does. Never shepherd so intensely threw his heart into his calling as Christ throws his heart and soul into the sacred calling of the shepherd of Israel.

He gives for his people all that he has, yea, he gives himself. His power is their defence: he lifts up his hand and says, "I give to my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." His wisdom is their guidance: his love is their perpetual shield: his infinity is their storehouse: his omniscience is their protection. Human and divine art thou, O Christ, in thy person, but the human and the divine are both alike for thy people. Thou hast a thousand offices, but thou dost exercise them all on the behalf of thine own flock. Oh, Christ is a good shepherd indeed; he is skilled as well as zealous in the art of shepherdry. He knows all the diseases of the flock, for he himself has felt all their griefs and woes. He has studied human nature—oh, how long! He knows it by a personal experience, and therefore knows it in such a way as it can be known only by himself. He is a good shepherd. Was there ever imagined one that could be like to him?

But then he says, "I am the good shepherd"; emphasis is to be laid upon the fact that *he is supreme and sufficient for all the needs of his people*. There have been other shepherds appointed by him that have, in their measure, been good; but *he is the shepherd*—the great shepherd of the sheep. He it is of whom we read that when the chief shepherd shall appear then shall we also appear with him in glory. None of us are *the shepherd*. We have to take our little share of the work beneath his eye, and do it for his sake, though never to our own satisfaction. It will be a joy to us, indeed, if he shall be satisfied with us, and say, "Well done." But all the under-shepherds in the world put together are poor things compared with *the head shepherd of the sheep*. He is the good shepherd of the sheep—pre-eminently good—good beyond all that are good. The shepherd of the shepherds, as well as the shepherd of the sheep. Good, because the whole company of the faithful, if they have any good in themselves, received it from him. "I am *the good shepherd*."

Now that being the meaning of the words let us just see Christ's claim in this chapter. Observe how he works it out. He says, if you notice the verse that comes before the text, "The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have

it more abundantly." See, then, he is our good shepherd *because he gives life to his sheep*. No shepherd can say about his flock what Christ says about his. "I have given all these sheep of mine the life that they have." What a good shepherd must he be! "They were dead: dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision," saith he, "but I have given them life." Listen to this, ye that are the sheep of his pasture: you have spiritual life, but he gave it to you. Lift up your eyes and bless him that ever your heart came to know what repentance is, and what faith is, and what prayer is, and what praise is, for now that you live unto God you see that it was he that quickened you. To your shepherd you owe everything. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. It is he that made us, he that new-made us, and not we ourselves.

Do you notice how he adds, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." So, beloved, if you now feel cold and dead, I ask you not to look to yourself, or to the pasture in which you are at the moment, or to the under-shepherd who seeks to care for you, but to him, the chief and choice shepherd. He gave you life at first and he will give you more of it, that you may have it abundantly. If there is any one of you whose heart is leaping for joy because the love of God is shed abroad within you by the Holy Ghost—brother, you have got all that from him. Bless him for it. If, on the other hand, another one is mourning because he feels the life within him to be so feeble—dear friend, you may have it strengthened by him who gave it at the first. All the praise and glory must be to your good shepherd, who is indeed good because the very life of his flock is his gift, and their increase in life is wrought by his sovereign power.

Our Lord shows us his good shepherdry further on, when he says, "He that is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." So see, secondly, the good shepherd is good *because he cares for the life which he has himself bestowed*. First he gives it; and then he protects it. The wolf is always round about the fold. When we do not hear him howling, yet we know that he is seeking to find an entrance somewhere. When he

gets in, it is said that he comes to kill and to destroy; and what can poor sheep do against a wolf if the shepherd be away? And what would you and I do against Satan in the world and in the temptations of the flesh, if Christ were away? We should soon fall a prey to the wicked adversary. But our good Master cares for us.

You know that precious word, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Though the simile is changed the meaning is the same. Our Saviour—our blessed shepherd—by night, though the frost be upon him, watcheth his flock; and by day, though the sun light on him with its fervent heat, he watcheth still. His very life seemed to be nothing to him in comparison with the protection of his people. Oh, brethren, what battles our shepherd has had with the wolf for us! I need not go into the story of our glorious David's prowess, even for the little lambs of his flock. But he may say truly to his Father, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear" because they came and "took the lamb out of the flock." Jesus takes even the feeblest from between the teeth of the foe, and will not suffer one to perish, because he cares for us. You know the meaning of caring for us, do you not? Well, I do not think that I can explain it except by asking you to think of what it is to care for your children. That is how the Lord Jesus cares for you. As for the children, poor little dears, they cannot take care of themselves; nor can you, though you try hard to do it; but as your little children leave their cares with you, and you care for them, you may leave your cares with your shepherd.

But just read on, and you will see still further what a good shepherd he is. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." That is to say, "As much as I and my Father know each other, so do I and my people know each other." He is the good shepherd *because he lives among his sheep*, he treats them as his children and so cares for them that he actually has communion with them. Sheep understand a good deal of what the shepherd says. There is a shepherd's language which you and I do not understand, but the sheep do. They know his whistle: they know his frown: they know the motion of his hand. He has a

language which he speaks to them. When Jesus Christ says, "I know my sheep," it means not only that he knows who are his and who are not, but that he knows all about each one. He knows your trouble at this instant, dear friend—your infirmity, your sin, your sorrow. He knows you a great deal better than you know yourself; and he sums you up, and understands you much better than the dearest friend you have beside. He never misunderstands you—he knows you so thoroughly.

Oh, it is a wonderful word that—one of those great deeps into which I drop my plumb-line but cannot find the bottom—"I know my sheep." It means that he owns them. He so knows them that, in the presence of God and of the holy angels, he will say, "Yes, that is my sheep." What, that one with the torn wool? That one with the lame foot? That one with a split ear? There is not much beauty in any of them. Yet the shepherd will not be ashamed of even the least. "It is mine," saith he, "and though it be not beautiful to any beside, it is beautiful to me, for I bought it with my blood, and I have fought the lion on its behalf, and therefore very dear it is to my soul." He knows his sheep. A man can scarcely enter into the feeling of a sheep, can he? And yet, Jesus Christ, though he be God, makes a stoop of condescension and enters into the feeling of the poorest and the most ignorant—and the most sinful—of all his children. Bone of their bone doth he become, so intimate is his union with them.

But then he says, "I am known of mine." Now we might think that a sheep cannot know much about the shepherd, but they do. They get to love him. Amongst the Eastern flocks there are, often, sheep that are peculiarly attached to the shepherd. They always follow at his heels, they never seem to care so much for the pasture as they do for him, they are always first, and, I may add, generally fattest, for they that keep nearest to him are pretty sure to get the sweetest bits of grass. And so, in the church of God, there are some that keep near the shepherd, and that know him well. And all his people know something of him. What a condescension this is—that the good shepherd so comes and lives among his people that he not merely knows them, but teaches them to know him. Blessed be his name for this! Try whether you cannot drink in the glorious meaning of this deep mystery.

But yet farther,—and to close this point,—our Lord is a good shepherd *because he gathers all his sheep*. Read the 16th verse. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." While his eye was on the Jews his heart was on the Gentiles too. He is a shepherd who is not content with the ninety and nine, but when he counts the flock over and knows there ought to be a hundred, his heart begins to care for the lost one, and he folds the ninety and nine, and lets them rest; but, as for himself, he gets away upon the mountain's bleak side, that he may find the lost one. Ah, my Lord, thou art a good shepherd, indeed—a much better shepherd than any among thy Church—or thy workers—are. We often forget the wandering ones. We get a church together; perhaps the building full; and we have too little missionary enterprise to look after the masses that are in ignorance. We see England bathed in the light of the Gospel, and feel but little zeal for sending the Word to the distant heathen lands. It ought not so to be. It is not so with Christ, for if he hath an elect one, be he where he may, he knows him, and his eye is on him, and he must bring him in. I wonder whether there is some one here to-night that he must bring in. You did not think when you came in to the Tabernacle that Christ was seeking you, but, perhaps, my Lord Jesus has bought you with his precious blood, and his Father gave you to him from before the foundations of the world, and perhaps he brought you here that you may know this, and come to him to-night. Thus saith the Lord, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Come, poor wanderer: come to the Good Shepherd's feet, and lay thyself down all helpless and forlorn; he will put thee on his shoulders, and carry thee back rejoicing.

I can say but very little, in the second place, about CHRIST'S PROOF OF HIS CLAIM, for I have already proved it. "I am the good shepherd," he saith. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Christ has given his life for us many times over. If I read the text without referring it to the one act of his death it seems to me to be very full of meaning. *In heaven he gave his life for them*. He had a life in heaven, such as we may guess at from a distance, but can never fully understand. He

dwelt as God inhabiting the praises of eternity ; but you know he gave up that life for us. He laid aside

“that most divine array,
And wrapt his godhead in a veil
Of our inferior clay.”

To leave the harps and hymns of heaven for the sorrows and sins of earth was giving up his life for his sheep.

When he was here, you know, *while he lived on earth he gave his life for the sheep*, for every moment of that life was spent for them. There was a connection between his private life in the carpenter's shop and their salvation—an intimate connection ; but in the public life what did he strain all his powers for but for this—that he might seek and save that which was lost? For his people, were those prayers on the cold mountain side at night! for his people, those earnest pleadings in the midst of the crowd by day! for them the weary journeys! for them the hunger and the thirst! for them the homelessness which forbade him to have a place whereon to lay his head!

Then *one dark night did he give his life for his sheep* in the sense, I doubt not, intended here. On that dread night—you know it—that night to be remembered, for it was the night of God's passover, the shepherd went round his flock, and the sheep were sleeping ; but there came the wolf ; and the shepherd knew his snarl. The sheep all startled at the howling, were scattered ; they forsook the shepherd and fled. That night he had enough to do to meet the wolf, and he stood at the fold to watch the sheep, and let them all go in safety ; and then he confronted the grim monster who leaped into the fold athirst for the blood of the sheep, but the shepherd caught him on his breast, and then came a desperate struggle between the two. The shepherd did bleed and sweat, did bleed and sweat, and bleed again. Great drops of blood fell to the ground, but he held the monster fast and firm. Our great shepherd was wounded in his head, in his shoulders, in his hands, in his feet, and one awful fang tore open his side, but he held the wolf—held him till he had slain him. Then, dashing down his body to the ground and putting his foot upon him, he shouted, “It is finished” ; but in the same moment the great shepherd fell. In

slaying our foe he had himself been slain; but scarcely had the shepherd touched the earth than, as if reanimated, up he sprang again, and said, "I lay down my life that I might take it again; therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life for the sheep." You know that story and need not that I tell it you at any length. But, oh, love him! Love him! Kiss the wounds. Worship this blessed shepherd who has conquered your foe and delivered you from the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, and set you safely for ever in his fold.

He is giving his life still. The life that is in the man Christ Jesus he is always giving for us. It is for us he lives, and because he lives we live also. He lives to plead for us. He lives to represent us in heaven. He lives to rule providence for us. He lives to prepare our mansions for us, whither we are going. He lives that he may come again and receive us to himself, that where he is there we may be also.

Now let us finish by trying to GET SOME JUICE OUT OF THESE THINGS, as I hope indeed that we have done as we have gone along.

First, if the good shepherd gives life, *let us try to get life abundantly.* Sometimes I wish I could leave off preaching any sermons, and do as I have seen the sergeant do when he is drilling a lot of men. He only says a word, "First position," and they take up the position. "Second position," and they take up that position. He has not a lot of eloquent talk, but he just tells them what to do. Now then, try if you can take up your position. More life is to be had. Breathe the prayer, "Good shepherd, thou hast given me life: give it me more abundantly. May I know thee more, love thee more, trust thee more, serve thee more, and be more like thee. Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy word."

That will do: go on. Take another position. If he be the good shepherd, *let us feel like sheep who have a good shepherd.* How do they feel? I do not think I know a sight that is more peaceable and happy than that of flocks at eventide when they have been gathered into a good pasture, or are among some prolific root-crop folded. They have eaten as much as they can, and they lie down on the grass to rest. No care enters their woolly heads. They have nothing to fret about. They might have, if they could worry about the future as some of us do.

Will there be turnips enough to-morrow? When there is dry weather, will there be grass enough? There is that butcher: when will he come? If they could understand me, I could suggest no end of cares and doubts and fears to sheep; but it does not enter into their constitution. I wish it did not enter into yours and mine. The shepherd cares for the sheep. I have heard of men that have kept sheep and cattle that have let them starve. You do not often hear of such things, for self-interest leads men to cherish their sheep; but I never heard of Christ neglecting any part of his flock. Come, then, let us feel quite quiet in his care. Away with your doubts and fears and cares. O care and anxiety and fretfulness, thou didst never feed me, nor strengthen me, nor help me. Thou hast worried me and weakened me, but thou hast done nothing else. Begone! As for us, brethren, if Christ is our shepherd, let us begin to say, "I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters: he restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." That is a happy religion, is it not? But it is a very important thing that all Christians should be happy. The enjoyments of believers lie very near their holiness.

Next, *let us be his own*. Jesus Christ says of the hireling, "whose own the sheep are not, for he leaveth the sheep," and in that he implies that when he tends the sheep that they are his own. Come, then, let us be his own. Have you ever given yourself up wholly to Christ—altogether to Christ?

We say that we belong to Christ, and we are not our own, but bought with a price. Do we live as if it were true? Come, let us take up the position now of being altogether Christ's own sheep. If the sheep could speak it would say, "There is not a fragment of wool on my back that belongs to me: there is no part of me that is my own. I belong to my shepherd, and I am glad to have it so." You belong to Christ as absolutely as that.

The next thought to take up is, *let us try to know more of him*. He says, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." Let us then know him better. You know how you come to know a man by getting into his company, by hearing his words, by marking his actions, by telling him your secret, and letting him

tell you his secret. Come and know Christ in this fashion. Let your head be on his bosom, and your whole self come into communion with his blessed self. Ask for that grace while you are round the table. Say, "Good Master, thou knowest me. Let me know thee. Oh, let my intercourse with thee be as nearly as possible equal to that which thou hast with thy Father, and thy Father with thee, that we may be one together."

The next and last is, *let us love him more*. Did you notice how he says in the 17th verse, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Let us make another verse, and say, "Therefore do my people love me because I lay down my life." Jesus did not say that, but let us make it true. Oh, how we ought to love our dear and ever blessed Lord! Do you feel love stirring in your bosom? Perhaps you say, "I wish I did feel it more." I am glad you say that. I think that is often as far as we can get. I do not, I cannot love thee, O Lord, as I ought,—

"Yet I love thee and adore—

Oh for grace to love thee more!"

I am persuaded that the man who loves Christ best is just the man who is most discontented with his own love. When a man lives wholly for Christ he is the very man who still looks for something yet beyond, and desires to serve Christ still better. Now, indulge your love to-night. Sit still and meditate on his love—enjoy his love. And then add, "I am so glad that I can say that I love him. He knows all things, and he knows that I love him." Just let those two seas meet. "Seas?" did I say. I must not say that. Let the little brooklet of your love to him flow into the mighty ocean of his love to you, and so let them blend and join. I have seen the Thames flowing on in his majestic course toward the sea, and every here and there a little rill drops into view for a while, but the meadows stretch between. The mighty river and the brooklet go side by side, but as they flow on, at last they melt into one. So let my poor soul's love to-night flow in the same course with the great love of Jesus, till at last it melts into his and life becomes, "Not I," but "Christ in me"; and my soul be for ever content.

XI

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE"

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."—John 14: 6.

JESUS had been speaking about the Father, about his going to the Father, about the Father's house, and about going there, and he was asked by Thomas this question, "We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" We are to understand this verse as being an answer to that question. He tells him where he was going, namely, to the Father, and also the way to the Father, namely, by himself. Now this verse has been read, and read, too, with a great deal of profit, without always being read correctly. For instance, suppose I were to divide my sermon into three parts to-night, and show that, first, Christ is the way; secondly, that he is the truth; and thirdly, that he is the life. I do not think I should be able to give you the meaning of the text, for you will observe that he is not speaking about three things—he does not say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"; he is speaking about only one thing, namely, that he is the way, and then the two words, truth and the life, are put in to explain what he means by the way. So I think. Luther, taking the first meaning and putting in an *and*, for it is necessary to put one in to make it out, says Christ is the way; that is, through him men begin to be Christians; secondly, he is the truth, that is, through him they are instructed further in the faith; thirdly, he is the life, that is, through him they enter into eternal blessedness in the life to come. Now it is very true, but it is not the truth taught here; at least, we think not, certainly if we follow the strict analogy of the language. Augustine read the passage this way, "I am the way, the true way, and the living way." But that is not quite it. There is truth in that, and it is more correct than Luther's reading, "I am the true way,

and the living way"; but we cannot see the sense without some considerable violation to the language. It is true, but not the truth taught here, and what we want to do is not only to preach about the truth, but the truth that is in our text. It appears to us that this was our Lord's meaning, "I am the way to God." That is the great teaching—"No man comes to the Father but by me; and I am the way in this respect—that no man can come to know the truth with regard to the Father except he knows me as the truth; and, secondly, no man can possess the life by which he comes to the Father except he receives me as the life. I am the way to the Father in a double sense—of being the truth which teaches men about the Father, and being the life which enables men to come to the Father, and have practical communion." Believing that to be the meaning of the text, we will try and work it out.

First, CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER SO FAR AS HE IS THE TRUTH.

He is so in this respect—nobody knows the Father until, first of all, he knows Jesus Christ. God the Father is to be seen in nature. He has painted every flower, and he it is that hangs every blade of grass with the glistening pearl of dew. But so dim is our eye, and, after all, so little of the more spiritual parts of his character could God reveal in mere materialism, that man does not behold God there. We are often told that we are to go from Nature up to Nature's God—just about as easy to go from the highest pinnacle of the Alps to the stars! The step is too long for human nature. Men have never taken it. Those men of old who ransacked nature—the old philosophers and teachers of the heathen—did not discover God. "The world, by wisdom, knew not God." Oh! what a maze of deities they had; what strange gods! What strange characters they gave to God! Our very children, in their classical learning in the schools, get their minds polluted by reading the deeds of beings that were called gods among the heathens; and still to this day if a man does not form the same gross conception of God as the ancient heathen did, it is partly to be accounted for by the almost unconscious effect of Christianity upon men's minds. Men cannot form such ideals of God living in England as they could do

living in Greece before the Gospel had been preached there; yet every idea of God that is not drawn by men from revelation, and is not brought to men through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is sure to be a false one, a lop-sided one—an ideal of God in which some one virtue preponderates to the destruction of others. It is not God at all; it is a gross caricature of God; it is, in fact, no more God than men think out by reason than the golden calf was God which came out of the fire when Aaron had thrust the gold into it. They did not know God. You have only to take up the works of any of our great original thinkers who scorn to call themselves Christians, and though you will see that Christianity has moulded their thought, you will only see truth so far as it has done that, unconsciously to themselves. But where you get their real thoughts and reasonings, you will find that they have not come to the Father, because they have neglected the great truth which is in Christ, which is the way to the great truths which are in the Father, God.

Now while this is true with regard to the person of the Father himself, let me remind you, in the next place, that it *is true with regard to everything about the Father*. Now there is one doctrine in Scripture which is peculiar to the Father. It is the doctrine of election. The Father hath chosen us to be his people. Everywhere in Scripture it is put down as the work of the first person of the blessed Trinity—to choose a people to himself that shall show forth his praise. Now there are many persons who want to get at that doctrine. I have known many unconverted people want to understand it. I get letters frequently from persons troubled about it. They say that they should feel peace if they could understand that doctrine. But, if any such are here to-night, I will speak to them. You cannot get to election; you cannot get to the Father by a direct road from where you are. Just read that signpost. “No man cometh unto the Father but by Christ.” If, then, you want to understand election, begin with redemption. You will never understand the eternal choice till you begin at the cross. Begin with this, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Do not begin at the 9th of Romans. You had much better begin at the 3rd of John, “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

everlasting life." You will be worrying yourself, and bothering your poor head, and tormenting your poor heart for many years, if you will try to get to the Father first. Your business is to take God's law and rule, and go to the Son upon the cross first, and then to the Father upon his throne.

It would be a strange thing if our children would insist upon going to the University before they went to the grammar school. They would never learn anything in that way, because the studies of the University are too severe for them till, first of all, they have gone to the preparatory school. It were an odd thing, indeed, if every man that took down his Bible should always begin it backwards and read first the Revelation, and if every man read the Lord's Prayer beginning at "Amen," and went backwards to "Our Father"; yet some minds will persist in this. There is a charm to them about the mystery of sovereignty and election, and they must needs begin with that. Little children, why must you eat strong meat first? There is the milk for you—be satisfied with your milk. It will strengthen you. You shall have the strong meat by-and-bye, when by reason of use your senses have been exercised; but do listen to Christ's tender words, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." There is no way to election except through redemption.

And now another illustration of the same truth. Even *the fatherhood of God is known only in Christ*. This is what is mainly intended in this verse. It is not known as a truth till, first of all, we know the truth concerning Christ, and the truth concerning Jesus, the first-born and elder brother, is the way to learn the truth concerning the entire family. What a muddle there is made in this world about the fatherhood of God. According to some, we are all of us all alike his children, and he must be indeed a strange Father if his dealings with the sons of men are to be considered as the dealings of a Father. Indeed, we can very well understand why some have said, "How can we account for this pit of hell?" Would a father put his children there? Certainly he would not. And if God be a Father to all mankind alike, and in the same sense, then it would be utterly unaccountable that there should be any eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. But this fatherhood is a fiction, a sheer and clear fiction, an invention of modern times.

There is another fatherhood in which God is the Father of

the twice born, the Father of the regenerate. The God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and, next of all, those who are in Jesus Christ. And when you come to know Christ as the Son, and yourself as one with him, then you begin to know what the fatherhood of God means in its speciality to the elect, in its truth, and in its depth, and in its blessed outflow; that, being a Father, he chastens us, he loves us, feeds us, guides us, trains us, educates us, and provides for us an inheritance which none shall ever be able to take from us. I venture to say it here again, that no man knows anything in truth about the fatherhood of God till he knows something about union with Christ—his own sonship by virtue of his brotherhood with Jesus.

And now I shall take another point of the same great truth. It is commonly thought that anybody can understand *the mercy of God*—that, at any rate, we can get to that. But, beloved, an infinite deal of mischief has been created in this world, by a mistaken notion about mercy with regard to God—that God is not very particular about our sins, that he does not judge us too severely, that he knows we are a great deal tempted, and that we have strong passions, and that, therefore, he winks at it all, and notwithstanding that we are not what we ought to be, yet he will graciously overlook it and accept us. That is the common notion of God's mercy, but there is nothing whatever in Holy Scripture to support it—there is no grain of evidence that such mercy as that is in the heart of God at all. The Lord is angry with the wicked every day. He hates sin, even a single sin. He will by no means spare the wicked. He neither closes his eyes against sin, nor will he stay his hand from the punishment of sin. No man comes to the Father's mercy till he has learnt Christ, but when you come to Jesus Christ, and you understand that God took his Son from his bosom and put him to death in our room and stead that he might have mercy upon us without the violation of his justice when we see how he made Christ to be our substitute, in order that he might freely and fully forgive—then we see what kind of mercy God's mercy is.

It is not mercy to the sin—he punished that—it is mercy to the sinner. It is not mercy that thinks little of sin, for he put his Son to death when sin was laid upon him. It is not mercy that winks at sin, and treats it as though it were a trifle, for he

made his Son cry out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a kind of mercy that is consistent with the fiercest wrath against every particle of iniquity. The Lord is a consuming fire, and will by no means spare the guilty. Every transgression shall have its recompense of reward. But yet he is a "God merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin," and this you can only know the meaning of when you know Christ as the truth that conducts you to the great truth of the mercy of God.

Equally the same remark might be made upon *God's justice*, but I shall not tarry upon that; I shall rather close these observations upon this first head by saying that we do not know truly *the power and dominion of God* till we, first of all, know Christ. We may know God to be omnipotent, we may understand that he doeth as he will, but that truth in its real force never breaks upon the soul till it shines through the Mediator. I am alarmed to think of God's greatness; I am afraid when I think of his supremacy. That he can do as he wills I know, and yet I rebel; that he can punish me, that he can crush me, I do know, and I tremble in his presence; but I feel no love to him until I see his love to me in the person of his dear Son, and then in a moment I bless him, for he is omnipotent, for his omnipotence is all on my side. I bless him that he is the king. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. I thank him that he does as he will, I rejoice that he does; for he only wills to do that which is for the good of his own chosen. You cannot love God in any one of his attributes, or know him aright and truly, unless it be through first knowing Jesus Christ.

Beloved, then let me say to you, gathering all up in one, you will do serious mischief to yourself if you study any truth concerning God apart from Jesus Christ. Luther was quite right when he said, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God. I will not try to study him as God. I know that I cannot look at the sun; I must have a smoked glass to look through—I must have the person of the God-man to take away the blinding glory of the invisible God—invisible because too bright for my eyes to gaze upon. You must have God in Christ. I will not try to study anything else." Our preaching, if we do not preach Christ, is useless. We may preach what we like about the Father, what we like about portions of Scripture, but if there is no Christ there will be no good come of it. Somebody once said, "Why is it that

the Methodists and others get people to hear them, and they have conversions, but you do not find crowds go to hear Unitarians, neither do you hear of conversions?" and somebody said, "There is no blood in the Unitarian religion, and the blood is the very life of it." Leave out the atoning sacrifice, and you have left out the marrow from the bones, and the bones from the body. The fabric becomes molluscous, soft, weak, powerless, yea, you have left out the very soul of the Gospel if you leave out Christ the Mediator, Christ the surety, Christ the atonement, Christ suffering in our room and stead.

As our preaching ought to be full of Christ, so let your studies of Scripture be. Read everything in the light of Christ. Calvinism I believe in, but not Calvinism without Christ—it becomes fatalism then. I am thankful to hear the practical preacher who preaches the precepts, but I do not believe in his preaching without Christ. He will get into legal bondage as sure as he is a man. The one thing that will keep preaching alive is to keep Christ in it, Christ at the top, Christ at the bottom, and Christ in the middle, and Christ all the way through. Many a man's theology is a very good pot of ointment, but there is a nasty fly in it that will make it stink, and there is nothing that will get the stinking fly out of the ointment but Christ our perfume; he keeps our theology sweet and pure. We do not know Christ himself, nor anything about him to any saving and practical purpose, except in that way. The truth that is in Christ is the way by which we get to the truth concerning God. And now we shall pass on to the second point:—

Second, CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER AS HE IS THE LIFE.

We get life through him—then we come to God. But we are dead till we get Christ, and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. We are dead, I say, till we get Christ, and the place of the dead is in the earth, and not in heaven. Bury the dead out of my sight; corruption cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Now observe we never come to God till first we get life enough in Christ *to have him as a hope of pardon*. I never dared think of coming to God till, first of all, I saw that he had laid help upon one that is mighty, even upon Christ Jesus. When I understood

that the only-begotten Son of God became man for sinner's sake and suffered in the sinner's stead, then I thought, "There is hope for me." And the next thought I had was, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will confess my sin, hoping that he will have mercy upon me." Is there one here that wants to be reconciled to God? Soul, thy only hope of ever being reconciled to him is on the cross; it is through Jesus, and through Jesus only, that thou canst have even half a hope that is worth having of ever being the friend of God. Oh! look thou there; go to his bleeding wounds to get life, and thou wilt then begin to get to God.

But it was further when *that hope grew into possession* and into faith—it was then that we came to God by Christ. Many of you recollect when you not only had a hope of being pardoned, but knew you were. Perhaps you remember the very day when all the load of your sin was rolled off your shoulder, and you felt light as air, though, before, your heart had been heavy as lead. You recollect that time. Did not you at the moment look at God, and bless God with all your heart? Did not you feel you loved him because he blotted out your sin? Did not you feel that day that you could talk to him, that you could praise him, that you could magnify him, that you could live for him, and die for him? I know I did. I knew I had come to God, because in Christ I had the full assurance that my transgressions were forgiven me. The life that gives the assurance of pardon is the life which is the way by which we come unto God.

Since that we have come to God through complete pardon, we have *often come to him in prayer*, but I will ask you, Did you ever get to the Father in prayer except through the Son? Have you ever tried to pray and forgotten Christ? If you have, it has been a dead failure. Remember the Primitive Methodist prayer-meeting, where the brother got hampered in prayer and could not go on, and somebody in the meeting cried out, "Plead the blood, brother; plead the blood"; and then the man began to pray again. You have always found it so I know—that you could not pray till you got to pleading the blood. I have many a time been with God in prayer, asking for a great blessing, and I have felt that I had not got it till I could come to such a text as this, "Do it, for thou hast promised it. Do it, for thou wilt glorify thine own Son; do it for his sake; he deserves it; thou

hast promised that he shall have the full reward for his soul's travail; do it for his sake." Then I have felt I have got it, for I had got the Father because I had pleaded the Son.

It is just the same *when coming to God in praise*. It is easy enough to sing a Psalm, pleasant enough to get a hymn and hum it over to yourself alone, but for real worship to God and thorough devout praise of him, you will never do it except you have been to the cross-foot first. There is no music that is sweet to God except Christ tunes the harp. The way for every chorister to come unto God with a sincere thank-offering is to come *via crucis*—by the way of the cross. Only in that way can he be accepted with his thank-offering.

But, beloved, I trust we know what it is to come to God *as a matter of lifelong experience*. It ought not to be by fits and starts that we come to the Father—like Enoch, we are to walk with God. It should be habitual with us to commune with the Most High. But, mark you, it can never be so unless it is habitual with us to rest upon the finished work of Christ. Lose your sense of acceptance in the beloved, and you will lose communion with God. Get away from the cross-foot, and you have got away from the foot of that ladder, the top whereof doth reach to heaven. There is no other ladder but Christ himself in his atonement. Get away from that, and you have taken away the bridge by which you can get to God at all. Fellowship with God must come through faith in Christ. The meeting-place under the law is the meeting-place under the Gospel. Now, under the law the only meeting-place was the mercy-seat, the propitiatory that covered the law, that golden slab covered the law on stone. There God met with his people. And Jesus Christ covers God's law completely. Our sins are not seen; his righteousness, his propitiation, *that* is seen, and God will meet us there, but he will meet us nowhere else. We can only come, then, to communion with the Father by reckoning and resting upon the mediatorial work of the Son.

And assuredly *at the last we shall want to come to the Father through Christ* when the veil that now separates us from the invisible world shall begin to be rent in twain. We shall long to be in the many mansions, and to hear our Father's welcome, but we shall have to die with Jesus' name upon our lips, in order to get there. We shall have to rise too; our spirit will have to

mount with Jesus; he must give it the wing; and when our body rises, it must be in the image of Jesus and in the life of Jesus, or else we cannot come unto the Father for the glory entrance as well as the grace entrance. It is because Christ is the life that we are able to come. We have no way whatever, and no possibility of ever discovering a way by which in our life we can have fellowship with God, the God of our salvation, except by receiving life through Jesus Christ. Oh! men and women, I trust you desire to be at one with your Maker. I trust you wish to be friends with him who can crush you as a moth between his fingers. I hope there is a desire within your soul to have him for a friend whom nothing can endure to have for an enemy. If, then, you will come to God, there is the gate—that gate with the mark, with the blood mark; you must go through there—through the wounds of Jesus. You get to God's heart only in that way. He has shut every other gate of mercy, if there ever were another open, and this one stands open as the only one, but that is open night and day. You must come to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, who suffered, died, rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of his Father for ever.

The last sentence of the text takes a sort of sweep—a broad sweep. It does not state that Christ is the way because he is the truth, or because he is the life only, but it says without exception, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," by which I understand, first, that: CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY THAT GOD HAS APPOINTED by which we can come to the Father.

The priest tells me that I must only get to the Father through him. We need not enter into such a question to debate with him. I would as soon believe a cow, if it could speak thus and tell me that I was to come to God by it, as believe that I was to come to God through a sinner like myself. Nay, God does not come to me in that shape; he has better ways and modes. "There is one God," says the Scripture, "and one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus." In that way we do believe, but in the way of priestcraft we do not believe, and may God save us from it. This is the only one, the absolutely solitary way to God, for God never appointed another; that is to say, he has never appointed a way through ceremonies, nor a way through frames of feeling, nor a way through good works.

What is the picture of the way to heaven by good works?

Why, it is Mount Sinai all on a blaze, like Etna smoking and heaving like a great volcano. And where are the people that want to get to heaven by good works? There they are, down in the valley; there is a great ring set round the mountain. Why do not they come up? In the first place, they do not want to come up, for the mountain is altogether on a smoke, and even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." In the next place, they cannot come up, for there are bounds set about the mountain, "and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." You cannot get nearer to God than that on the footing of works, for Mount Sinai is the symbol of works. Look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. You cannot get to God that way. Calvary is *the* mountain. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill that God hath chosen—the Calvary of the cross, the Golgotha of the tremendous sacrifice. There you can get to God; he has appointed that to be the place where you shall meet with him. Oh! do not try to find another way; be not so arrogant as to say, "This is my way," but take God's way and come humbly now to Jesus crucified, and you shall meet with God and find mercy and pardon.

Next, it is *the only actual way*. You never did meet the man that did get to God except through Jesus Christ. I have known men who talked about worshipping the pure god of Nature. I knew one who never went to a place of worship, and when I spoke to him, he said, "I worship God in my own garden." I said, "Yes, I suppose that is a god made of wood. I think I heard you knocking him down the other morning," and I believe that is the true worship of nature. It does not go much beyond that sort of thing, and if you find out those who profess to find out God without coming to Jesus Christ, you will find their god is their belly, and that they worship pleasure, and they lie in their throat when they talk about coming to God apart from Jesus Christ. They do not come; no one ever did come; no one ever shall come—the majority of them do not want to come. He that casts off Christ casts off God with him; or he that says, "I would come to God, but will not come to Christ," contradicts himself. There is, deep down in his very soul, a hatred to God, to the very true God, or else there would be no hatred to the Christ of God. But Jesus Christ is the way, the only way, but,

blessed be God's name, *he is an open way*. Whosoever desires to come to God the Father may come through Jesus Christ. The way to God is open. God's mercy is as free as the air we breathe to every soul that will take Christ and rest in Jesus Christ.

Come now; come with all thy sins about thee; come in all thy filth, and rags, and leprosy. Come, though the sentence of wrath hover over thee; and the black clouds of justice threaten to smite thee with the lightning of eternal wrath. Thou mayest come just now, and as thou art, if thou wilt but come through Christ. We want a mediator between our souls and God, but we do not want any mediator between our souls and Christ. We need to get ready to come to God, but we need not get ready to come to Christ. You cannot come to God except you are washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, but you may come to Christ just as you are, waiting not to rid yourselves of one foul blot; just as you are, without any good thing whatsoever, without even enough goodness in you to be seen with a microscope, and with so much sin that scarce could eternity hold it.

And this way *is a most suitable one* for all here present. You know if I want to go up to the top of a house, and a ladder goes only half-way, it is no use. If I want to go to God, I want a way that reaches up to God. Now Christ is himself God. He will lead us right up to God through himself, if we get to him. Christ is a man just like myself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin, and was a sufferer of human infirmities, even as you are, and died as you will. He lived in suffering, as you may do. Oh! then, see the ladder has its foot in his humanity and, again, has its top in his deity. Climb it. He is a suitable Saviour for you. What kind of man was Jesus Christ when he was here on earth? He was very holy, but was he very reserved? Was he distant? Did he turn his back when he saw a sinner? Did he get the other side of the street lest he should touch him, and so be defiled with the presence of a publican or a harlot? The Pharisees did that, but not the Master, for this man received sinners and ate with them, sat at the same table with them, and he was called the friend of publicans and sinners.

Oh! sinner, what a Christ, Christ is! What a suitable Saviour for you! Do not think to-day that he is the judge of sinners. To-day he is the friend of sinners. Do not look at him to-day as

though he were the censurer of sinners, the critic and the cynic against sinners. No, but the lover of sinners' souls. Oh sinner, may his Spirit draw you to come to him in these pews. Let this silent cry go up, "Jesus, Son of man and Son of God, bring me to thy Father; teach me thy Father by teaching me thyself; give me life before God by giving me life in thee. Thou art the way—thyself, in thine own person. I trust thee; be the way to me, to me, to me, unworthy though I am. Dear, dear Saviour, glorify thy mercy by forgiving my sin, my great sin, and accept my unworthy person through thine infinite compassion, and reconcile me unto God." Oh! such a prayer as that will be heard. Have you prayed it? It is heard. If you do not feel it is heard, pray it again; keep on praying it; but, above all, look to Christ upon the cross; count the purple drops as they distil from his dear wounds. Remember that he was God that died upon that cross. Sit and look, and look, and look, and look again. Look, I say, and look again, and if peace does not come with looking, keep on looking, and you will get peace there, and faith there, and life there.

XII

AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—1 John 2: 1.

THE Apostle John presents us with a very clear and emphatic testimony to the doctrine of full and free forgiveness of sin. He declares that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin, and that if any man sin, we have an Advocate. It is most evident that he is not afraid of doing mischief by stating this truth too broadly; on the contrary, he makes this statement with the view of promoting the sanctity of his "little children." The object of this bold declaration of the love of the Father to his sinning children is "that ye sin not." This is a triumphant answer to that grossly untruthful objection which is so often urged by the adversaries of the Gospel against the doctrines of free grace—that they lead men to licentiousness. It does not appear that the Apostle John so thought, for in order that these "little children" should not sin, he actually declares unto them the very doctrine which our opponents call licentious. Those men who think that God's grace, when fully, fairly, and plainly preached, will lead men into sin, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It is neither according to nature nor to grace for men to find an argument for sin in the goodness of God. Human nature is bad enough—and far be it from me to flatter that leprous criminal, that reeking mass of corruption—but even a natural conscience revolts at the baseness of sinning, because grace abounds. Shall I hate God because he is kind to me? Shall I curse him because he blesses me? I venture to affirm that very few men reason thus. Such arguments are so transparently abominable that few consciences are so dead as to tolerate them. Bad as human *nature* is, it seldom turns the goodness into an argument for rebelling against

him ; as for souls renewed by grace, they never can be guilty of such infamy.

The believer in Jesus reasons in quite another fashion. Is God so good?—then I will not grieve him. Is he so ready to forgive my transgressions?—then I will love him and offend no more. Gratitude hath bands which are stronger than iron, although softer than silk. Dream not that we hate sin merely because of the hell which follows it! If there were no heaven for the righteous, the sons of God would follow after goodness, because their regenerated spirits pant for it ; and if there were no hell for the wicked, from the necessity of his new-born nature the true Christian would strive to escape from all iniquity. Loved of God, we feel we must love him in return. Richly, yea, divinely forgiven, we feel that we cannot live any longer in sin. Since Jesus died to rid us from all uncleanness, we feel that we cannot crucify our Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. We need no nobler or more cogent arguments to lead a man to thorough consecration to God's cause and detestation of all evil than those fetched from the free grace of God. And what if some men do pervert the doctrine? Do not wicked minds corrupt everything? When were there not evil men to wrest Scripture to their own destruction? Shall we keep back the children's bread lest the dogs should steal the crumbs? Shall we destroy health-restoring drugs because fools may poison themselves therewith? Shall the pure virgin truth be condemned because gross villains have forged her name and abused her character? God forbid. Let us never blush to preach the whole Gospel, and to preach its full forgiveness of sin in the boldest and baldest manner, believing that the naked breasts of truth are her best armour, and that she is least protected when she is encumbered with a coat of mail of human reasoning and prudence.

We commence our exposition of the text with the remark that **THE SAINT IS STILL A SINNER.**

Our Apostle says—"If any man sin." The "if" may be written in as small letters as you will, for the supposition is a matter of certainty. "If any man sin?" Although the gentle hand of the beloved disciple uses such mild and tender terms, putting it as a supposition, as though it were an astonishing thing after so much love, and mercy, and kindness, that we

should sin, yet John very well knew that all the saints do sin, for he has himself declared that if any man says that he does not sin he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Saints are, without exception, sinners still. Far be it from us that divine grace has wrought a wondrous change, it were no grace at all if it had not. It will be well to note this change. *The Christian no longer loves sin*; it is the object of his sternest horror; he no longer regards it as a mere trifle, plays with it, or talks of it with unconcern. He looks upon it as a deadly serpent, whose very shadow is to be avoided. He would no more venture voluntarily to put its cup to his lip than a man would drink poison who had once almost lost his life through it. Sin is dejected in the Christian's heart, though it is not ejected. Sin may enter the heart, and fight for dominion, but it cannot sit upon the throne.

The Christian *never sins with that enormity of boasting of which the unregenerate are guilty*. Others wallow in transgressions, and make their shame their glory, but if the believer falleth he is very quiet, mournful, and vexed. Sinners go to their sins as children to their own father's orchard, but believers slink away like thieves when they have been stealing forbidden fruit. Shame and sin are always in close company in a Christian. If he be drunken with evil he will be ashamed of himself, and go to his bed like a whipped cur. He cannot proclaim his transgressions as some do in the midst of a ribald crowd, boasting of their exploits of evil. His heart is broken within him, and when he has sinned he goes with sore bones for many and many a day.

Nor does he sin *with the fulness of deliberation* that belongs to other men. The sinner can sit down by the month together, and think over the iniquity that he means to perpetrate, till he gets his plans well organised and has matured his project; but the Christian cannot do this. He may put the sin into his mouth and swallow it in a moment, but he cannot continue to roll it under his tongue. He who can carefully arrange and plot a transgression is still a true child of the old serpent.

And again, *he never chews the cud of his sin*; for after he has sinned, however sweet it may have been in his mouth, it becomes bitterness in his bowels, and glad enough would he be to be rid

of it altogether. The retrospect of sin to a converted man is nothing but blackness and darkness in his heart.

The Christian, unlike other men, *never finds enjoyment in his sin*; he is out of his element in it. Conscience pricks him; he cannot, even if he would, sin like others. There is a refined taste within him, which all the while revolts at the apparently dainty morsel of sin. The finger of grace, with its secret and mysterious touch, turns all the honey into gall, and all the sweetness into wormwood. If the Christian shall sin, and sin I grant he will, yet it shall always be with half-heartedness; still he clings to the right, the evil that he would not he does, while the good that he would do he fails to perform.

You will notice too, how different the Christian is *as to the habit of sin*. The ungodly man is frequent in overt deeds of rebellion, but the Christian, at least in open acts of crime and folly, rather falleth into than abideth in them. The swallow dippeth with his wing the brook, and then he is up again into the skies, soaring toward the sun; but the duck can swim in the pool or dive under the water—it is in its element. So the Christian just touches sometimes with his wing—alas! for him—the streams of earth, but then he is up again where he should be; it is only the sinner that can swim in sin and delight therein.

There are all these degrees of difference between the Christian and the ungodly man, and far more, for the believer is a new creature, he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people; the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man, but for all that we must come back to that with which we started—that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so *from the imperfection of his nature*. His nature is such that he cannot but sin until the old Adam shall die in him, and that will not be till the funeral knell is tolled for himself. Sin, by reason of his imperfection, pollutes the best thing the believer does. Sin mars his repentance. There is filth in our tears, and unbelief in our faith. The best thing we ever did apart from the merit of Jesus only swelled the number of our sins, for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight, and as he charged his angels with folly, much more must he charge us with it, even in our most angelic frame of mind. The song that thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains, has still mortal infirmity

in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a sinful prayer, and only moves that arm because the Sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication. I dare to say it, the best faith and the highest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much of the creature's infirmity in it as to be worthy of God's eternal wrath in itself considered. There is so much sin about the highest and loftiest thing to which the creature can attain, that we mournfully confess—"We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags."

As the Christian thus sins in his devout performances, *so he constantly errs in the every-day tenour of his life*. Sins of omission to wit, how many of these may be compressed into a single hour! Oh! what multitudes of things we have left undone! Remember that these make up a very great part of the sin which brings the curse. "I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Have we no sins of commission? Our thoughts, our imaginations, our words, and must I not say our deeds, have these been what they should be? If any man dare to tell me that he lives for a single day without a sinful deed, I will dare to tell him that he never knew himself. Do but see your own chamber. If you disturb it I see but little dust floating about in it, but if a stray sunbeam shall enter through the window I see millions upon millions of little motes dancing up and down, and I discover that the whole of what I supposed to be clear, pure air, is filled with innumerable atoms of all sorts of things, and that I am breathing these even in the purest atmosphere. So is it with our heart and life. When the Spirit shines into us we see that the atmosphere of life is as full of sin as it can hold, and a man may sooner count the hairs of his head, or the sands upon the sea-shore, or the drops of the dew of the morning upon the grass, than count the sins of a single day. You will tell me these are little sins, but I remind you that a multitude of grains of sand may overload a vessel quite as surely as bars of iron, and therefore these daily iniquities should be confessed with care, and repented of with sincerity.

Moreover, *many Christian people sin from certain peculiar infirmities*. You know, each of you, what your own infirmity

may be; at least I hope you have been watchful enough to discover it. Some sin *through shortness of temper*; they are not long-winded in patience with their fellow-creatures; they are vexed; they grow hot; perhaps they imagine some cause for anger where there is none, and they wax warm, and speak unadvisedly with their tongue. This gives much trouble to many of the most gracious of men. A hasty temper is a perpetual temptation. There are others *who have a high and proud spirit*, and if they fancy they are a little snubbed or put into the background, at once they feel inclined to resent it. There—listen to him—"I am not to be thus trodden upon! Who dares to treat me thus?" Many who have done good service for Christ have had to carry that thorn in their flesh even down to their graves. Sensitiveness, a high spirit, a suspicious temperament, these are like blisters to the feet of a pilgrim, he will always walk painfully, if not slowly.

Some of us have to contend with *sloth*. Perhaps we are afflicted with a torpid liver, and the physician has never been able to touch the complaint. God help the man that has that, for he will need to whip himself every day to his duty, and often he will feel so dull and sleepy, that he will wish for a Cowper's "lodge in a vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade" that he might hide himself in quiet from the toil of the spiritual harvest.

How many we know, who have to contend with *constant unbelief brought on through depression of spirits*. Their nerves, perhaps, have experienced a great shock at some period in life, and, constitutionally they look always at the black side of affairs. If they see a grassy knoll they suspect it to be an extinct volcano; and if they happen to be in a green valley where the mountains frown like the battlements of heaven, they are dreadfully afraid that an avalanche must certainly come down and destroy them. They cannot help it; it is a peculiarity of their constitution, but it leads them into much sin, and should cause them much repentance before the face of the living God.

So I might go on to mention the peculiarity of some *who are suffering from bashfulness*; they will often be tempted to hold back where they ought to go forward, and if not to disavow their Master yet not to proclaim their love for him so boldly as they should do.

We all sin *from the assaults of evil*. There are times when we are not watchful, and as Satan is always on his watch-tower he is sure to attack us just then. We wear our vizor up and then in flies the stone from the infernal sling. The *temptations of the world*, when we are thrust into ungodly company, and the *trials of business' and even of the household*, all these in unguarded moments may take the Christian off his feet. Sinner is *my* name, sinner my nature, but thanks be to him who came to save sinners, I am a sinner *saved*.

I leave that point for a second one full of comfort. OUR SINS DO NOT DEPRIVE US OF OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST.

Note the text. "If any man sin we *have* an advocate." Yes, we have him though we do sin; we have him still. It does not say—"If any man sin he has forfeited his advocate," but "we have an advocate," sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Into whatsoever he may be suffered to fall, yet none of these things can by any possibility touch his title deeds. Indeed in some characters Jesus is only mine when I can claim the name of sinner. I cannot have an advocate unless I do sin, I do not want one. Who wants an advocate to plead his cause in a court of law if there is no suit against him? Sin is a charge against me; I am a sinner; I have an advocate. "Israel hath forsaken me," saith God, "and played the harlot; she hath gone a-whoring from me, but return, return, for I am married unto thee." She is his wife still, you see, though she had gone into adultery. The Christian, even when he has stained and fouled himself, is the spouse of Christ still for all that. We are members of his body, and if so the members cannot be removed or taken off and on—limbs are not so easily removed. Did not Christ wash Peter? Peter was a member of Christ's own body, and yet Peter wanted washing. O blessed picture, the Head washing the feet. So at this day, stained though we be, we are claimants of Christ as Head of our body.

And, beloved, we know that notwithstanding all our sin we are perfectly justified in Christ, for he justifieth the ungodly. We know, too, that we are perfectly accepted, for we are accepted in the Beloved, and not in ourselves. Notwithstanding all our iniquities we are pardoned, for the fountain is opened

for sin and for all uncleanness, not for righteousness and purity, but for sin and for uncleanness; therefore we conclude that all our sins do not deprive us of that which Christ is to us, namely, the fountain of life, and light, and purity, and safety. Oh! my brethren, if our first title to Christ had depended on our good works, then it would fall when our works grew bad, but he loved us when we were as bad as we could be.

He chose us when we were sinners; he bought us when we were sinners; he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins; and if we are as bad as that to-day, he loves us still. If our right to heaven rested on the covenant of works, that unstable tenure, it would soon fail us; but seeing it rests on the covenant of grace, which has no conditions in it, but which is of pure immutable grace from first to last, therefore be it known unto you, O sons of God, that notwithstanding all your faults and failings, wanderings and backslidings, he is your God and you are his children; he will be your God to all eternity, and you shall be his children world without end.

Our third point is, THAT THE ADVOCATE IS PROVIDED ON PURPOSE TO MEET THE FACT THAT WE ARE STILL SINNERS.

If I be a sinner, then there is a court, and there is one who sits as Judge—the Father. There is a charge against me, otherwise I should not want an advocate to meet it, and this implies that I have sinned. There is an adversary to press his suit against me, and he would hardly venture to do this if there were no sin. There must be a right of reply on my part; I must have the right to put in a disclaimer in court, and to stand up and plead before the bar of justice. He who has a right to plead in court is the man who is accused, and the man who has some offence. If I were neither accused nor had been a sinner, then I should have no right to occupy the time of the court; but being a sinner, and being brought up upon that charge, and having one who presses the charge against me, I have a right to reply, and that reply, through God's good grace, I have a right to make through my advocate.

Let us say concerning our advocate, that he is ordained with a special view to sinners; all his names and attributes prove him to be a suitable advocate for such. You and I, who though saved are still sinners, may safely put our case into his hands, for see who he is—"Jesus Christ the righteous."

"*Jesus.*" Ah! then he is an advocate such as I want, for he loves me and takes an interest in me. Jesus is the name of one who became man for my sake. He knows what sore temptations mean; he understands what trials mean, what afflictions mean. I am glad I have one who will be interested in my welfare, and will plead for me as a friend for a friend, and as a brother for a brother. I thank God that though I sin I still have Jesus who is my "brother born for adversity," the friend of sinners, and will therefore plead the sinner's part. Is his name Jesus? Then he is sure to succeed, because "they shall call his name Jesus, for *he shall save* his people from their sins"; his very name implies his success. Is his name Jesus? Then if he do not succeed in my case his honour is compromised. He is called Jesus because he does save sinners, if he does not save me he is no Jesus. If I, a sinner, trusting in him, give him my cause to plead as my advocate, and I be tried, and the verdict be against me, he is no Jesus; he may lay down his claim to be Jesus, for he does not and cannot save his people from their sins. Beloved friends, do you not see how the saint is regarded as a sinner because he who is his advocate is the appointed Saviour of sinners. He is put down as their advocate, I say, because he is the sinner's friend. I find him always on the side of publicans and sinners, offenders, and those who have gone out of the way; and therefore I conclude, that sinner though I be, continually sinning as I am, I may leave my case with Jesus, for he is just the advocate the sinner wants.

Notice, next, it is "*Jesus Christ*"—Christos—the anointed. This shows *his authority* to plead. There are only certain gentlemen who can plead in the Court of Chancery, and only certain others that can enter the Common Pleas, or the King's Bench. Jesus Christ has a right to plead, for he is the Father's own appointed, the Father's own anointed. My soul, thou hast a good pleader, one whom God himself has chosen to plead the sinner's cause. If he were of thy choosing he might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, do thou put thy trouble where God has laid his help. He is Christ, and therefore authorised; but I add, he is Christ, and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has also qualified him for his work. He can plead better than Judah pleaded when he spake of Benjamin. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What

words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will he use when he stands up to plead for me! But more, he is Christ, that is, he is God's Messiah; therefore God would not send him unless he *guaranteed him*. If God should send into this world a Saviour who could not save, then God would have no mercy. God's appointing and sending Christ is a guarantee of Christ's success.

Notice next, it is "Jesus Christ *the righteous*." This is not only his character, but it is his plea. My Lord and Master, the great advocate, would not plead a bad cause, for he is Jesus Christ *the righteous*; therefore if I sin, if I be put down among the many men that sin, yet if he pleads for me my case must be good, for he would not take up a bad one. But how can he do this? Why, because he meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by this plea on his part, that *he* is righteous. He seems to say to the great Father in the day when the sinner stands arraigned—"Yes, my Father, that sinner was unrighteous, but remember that I was accepted as his substitute; I stood to keep the law for him, and gave my active obedience; I went up to the cross and bled, and so gave my passive obedience; I have covered him from head to foot with my doing and my dying; I have so arrayed him that not even the angels are adorned as he is, for though they may be clothed with the perfect righteousness of a creature, I have given him the righteousness of God himself; I am become unto my people the Lord their righteousness. What can there be asked more for the sinner than this? Jesus Christ the righteous stands up to plead for me, and pleads his righteousness; and mark, he does this not if I do not sin, but if I do sin. There is the beauty of my text. It does not say—"If any man do not sin we have an advocate"; but "if any man sin we have an advocate," so that when I have sinned, and come creeping up to my closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart, and feel that I am not worthy to be called God's son, I have still an advocate, because I am one of the men that sin. I sin, and I have an advocate. Oh! I know not how to express the joy I feel in my soul to be able to put it so! It is not—"If any man be righteous we have an advocate"; it is not—"If any man be prayerful, and careful, and godly, and walk scripturally, and in the light," and so on, but "If any man *sin* we have an advocate."

And now we turn to our fourth point, which is, that THIS

TRUTH, SO EVANGELICAL AND SO DIVINE, SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED.

It should be practically remembered, *at all times*. Every day I find it most healthy to my own soul to try to walk as a saint, but in order to do so I must continually come to Christ as a sinner. I would seek to be perfect; I would strain after every virtue, and forsake every false way; but still, as to my standing before God, I find it happiest to sit where I sat when I first looked to Jesus, on the rock of his works, having nothing to do with my own righteousness, but only with his. Depend on it, the happiest way of living is to live as a poor sinner and as nothing at all, having Jesus Christ as all in all. You may have all your growths in sanctification, all your progress in graces, all the development of your virtues that you will; but still I do earnestly pray you never to put any of these where Christ should be. If you have begun in Christ then finish in Christ. If you have begun in the flesh and then go on in the flesh, we know what the sure result will be. But if you have begun with Jesus Christ as your Alpha, let him be your Omega. I pray you never think you are rising when you get above this, for it is not rising, but slipping downwards to your ruin.

Make this essentially the rule of your life *on particular occasions*. Here let me say a word that may at once comfort and enlighten some here who are in darkness. When the Spirit of God gives you a clearer view of your own depravity, mind that you hold to this: "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." Perhaps when you were first converted you did not suspect the depth of wickedness that lay under, in your heart; perhaps you did not even believe that you could be so unutterably bad as you really were. But lately the fountains of the great deep have been broken up and you have been horrified. You are driven mad, or else into despondency and despair, by this discovery of your innate corruption until you fly to this,—“Sinner as I am, and never more consciously so than I am now that God’s spirit has enlightened me, I yet know that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, and I, black, foul, and filthy, more foul and filthy than I ever thought myself to be, put my case into the hand of my advocate, and leave it there for ever.” When after this you have fallen into sin, you have fallen into some sin that pricks your

conscience; you carry about with you a something that will not let you sleep at night; there is a sin that disturbs you, and you wish you could forget that you had committed it; you have gone before God as David did; you have used the language of the fifty-first Psalm, but you cannot get rid of that sin; you believe you are a child of God sometimes, but that sin has got into your conscience, and, like a cancer, is eating into your comfort. My brother, now is your time; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Jesus Christ is of no use to you if he will only save you when you have no sin. Let me repeat it: now you are a sinner; now you are condemned by the verdict of your own conscience; now you have sinned, sinned wilfully and foully, and God forbid that I should extenuate your sin; yet let your sin be as gross, and black, and hellish, as it may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ you have an advocate with the Father, and through that advocate your cause shall speed, and your sin shall be put away. Perhaps you will tell me that your sin has had some gross aggravation about it. You deserve the hottest wrath of God and the deepest hell. But thus saith the Lord unto thee—"I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities; return unto me." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." It does not say, "If some men sin we have an advocate"; or, "if some men sin in an aggravated way." No, it is not put so. It says, "If *any* man sin, we have an advocate with the Father"; so that though you have heaped aggravations one upon another, and your crime has been as foul as any that could have been committed, still you can say, "we have an advocate."

What if I add to all this, that you have so sinned as to bring a scandal upon the name of God, upon his Church, and upon his cause? Oh! my brother, you may well weep in secret; you may weep tears of blood for having done this; but still, for all that, I cannot shut the gate where God sets it wide open. I have not a thunderbolt for you; if you be a child of God, still mercy is free, and still it is preached to you—"If any man sin," publicly, like David, so as to make God's enemies to blaspheme, yet still "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Oh! what splendid mercy is this!

I wish I could meet the case of that brother who has long given up all hope of ever being restored. He has been excom-

municated; he has been driven away from the society of the godly; he thinks though he is in this house he has no business here; and sometimes the devil has tempted him to make away with himself, and he has said, if I must be lost I may as well be lost at once. Ah! but, my brother, you dare not do it with such a text of Scripture as this before your eyes. The Lord loves you still, and if he ever loved you, all your sin cannot wean his heart from you. You may have gone to the utmost length of your tether, but he has so tied you that you can never go beyond it. You may have got to the very extremity and edge of the precipice, but over that edge you must not and you shall not go. This day he sends me to stop you. Return! return! return! a Father bids you return. You are feeding swine to-day and all foul and filthy as you are, you would fain fill your belly with their husks; but you cannot; you have a hunger that husks can never satisfy. Your Father waits to receive you. Come, he will meet you; he will fall upon your neck and kiss you; he will set you at his own table, and there shall be music and dancing for you. The best robe awaits thee, prodigal! The fatted calf is killed for thee! Come. O believe it; believe that God is able to do this great thing for thee. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above thy thoughts, and his ways above thy ways."

XIII

A PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."—Deuteronomy 18: 15-19.

MAN, the creature, may well desire intercourse with his Creator. When we are right-minded we cannot bear to be like fatherless children, born into the world by a parent of whom we know nothing whatever. We long to hear our father's voice. Of old time, or ever sin had entered into the world, the Lord God was on the most intimate terms with his creature man. He communed with Adam in the garden; in the cool of the day he made the evening to be seven-fold refreshing by the shadow of his own presence.

Through his divine grace the Lord did not leave our fathers altogether without a word from himself even after the Fall, for between the days of Adam and Moses there were occasional voices heard as of God speaking with man. "Enoch walked with God," which implies that God walked with him and had communion with him, and we may rest assured it was no silent walk which Enoch had with the Most High. The Lord also spake to Noah, once and again, and made a covenant with him: and then he, at still greater length and with greater frequency, spake with Abraham, whom he graciously called his friend. Voices also came to Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and celestial beings flitted to and fro between earth and heaven. Then there

was a long pause and a dreary silence. No prophet spoke in Jehovah's name, no voice of God in priestly oracle was heard, but all was silent while Israel dwelt in Egypt, and sojourned in the land of Ham. So completely hushed was the spiritual voice among men that it seemed as if God had utterly forsaken his people and left the world without a witness to his name; yet there was a prophecy of his return, and the Lord had great designs, which only waited till the full time was come. He purposed to try man in a very special manner, to see whether he could bear the presence of the Lord or no. He resolved to take a family, multiply it into a nation, and set it apart for himself, and to that nation he would make a revelation of himself of the most extraordinary character. So he took the people who had slaved amongst the brick kilns of Egypt, and made them his elect, the nation of his choice, ordained to be a nation of priests, a people near unto him, if they had but grace to bear the honour. Though they had lain among the pots, with a high hand and an outstretched arm he delivered them, and with gracious love he favoured them, so that they became for beauty and excellence as the wings of a dove that are covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.

He divided the Red Sea and made them a way of escape, and afterwards set that sea as a barrier between them and their former masters. He took them into the wilderness, and there fed them with manna which dropped from heaven, and with water out of the rock did he sustain them. After a while he began to speak to them, as he had never spoken to any nation before. He spake with them from the top of Sinai, so that they heard his voice out of the midst of the fire, and in astonishment they cried, "We have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." But the experiment failed. Man was not in a condition to hear the direct voice of God. On the very first day the people were in such terror and alarm that they cried out, "This great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more we shall die." As they stood still at a distance to hear the words of God's perfect law they were filled with great fear, and so terrible was the sight that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." The people could not endure that which was commanded, and entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.

They felt the need of some one to interpose—a daysman, an interpreter, one of a thousand was needed to come between them and God. Even those among them that were the most spiritual, and understood and loved God better than the rest, yet confessed that they could not endure the thunder of his dreadful voice, and their elders and the heads of their tribes came unto Moses and said, “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.”

The Lord knew that man would always be unable to hear his Maker's voice, and he therefore determined not only to speak by Moses, but, ever and anon, to speak by his servants the prophets, raising up here one and there another; and then he determined, as the consummation of his condescending mercy, that at the last he would put all the word he had to say to man into one heart, and that word should be spoken by one mouth to men, furnishing a full, complete, and unchangeable revelation of himself to the human race. This he resolved to give by one of whom Moses had learned something when the Lord said to him in the words of our text, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” We know assuredly that our Lord Jesus Christ is that prophet like unto Moses by whom in these last days he has spoken unto us. See Peter's testimony in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and Stephen's in the seventh chapter of the same book. “This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house,” yet did he bear a gracious likeness to Moses, and therein his apostles found a sure argument of his being indeed the Messiah, sent of God.

The subject of this discourse is the Lord's speaking to us by Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, and our earnest aim is that all of us may reverently hear the voice of God by this greatest of all prophets.

We begin by considering how urgently there existed THE NECESSITY for a Mediator. I need but very short time to set this forth. There was a necessity for a Mediator in the case of the Israelites, first, *because of the unutterable glory of God*, and their own inability to endure that glory, either with their eye, their

ear, or their mind. We cannot suppose that the revelation of God upon Sinai was the display of all his greatness: nay, we know that it could not be such, for it would have been impossible for man to have lived at all in the presence of the infinite glory. Habakkuk, speaking of this manifestation, says, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand"; but he adds, "there was the hiding of his power." Despite its exceeding glory, the manifestation upon the mount of God at Horeb was a subdued manifestation, and yet, though it was thus toned down to human weakness, it could not be borne. The unveilings of Jehovah's face no mortal eyes could bear. The voice with which God spake at Sinai is by Moses compared to the voice of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long, and also to the roll of thunder; and we all know the awe-inspiring sound of thunder when it is heard near at hand, its volleys rolling overhead.

The voice of the Lord God is inconceivably majestic, and it is not possible that we, poor creatures, worms of the dust, insects of a day, should ever be able to hear it and live. We could not bear the full revelation of God apart from mediatorial interposition. Perhaps when he has made us to be pure spirit, or when our bodies shall have been "raised in power," made like unto the body of our Lord Jesus, we may then be able to behold the glorious Jehovah, but as yet we must accept the kindly warning of the Lord in answer to the request of Moses, "thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live." The strings of life are too weak for the strain of the unveiled presence; it is not possible for such a gossamer, spider-like thread as our existence to survive the breath of Deity, if he should actually and in very deed draw nigh to us. It appeared clearly at Sinai, that even when the Lord did accommodate himself, as much as was consistent with his honour, to the infirmity of human nature, man was so alarmed and afraid at his presence that he could not bear it, and it was absolutely necessary that instead of speaking with his own voice, even though he whispered what he had to say, he should speak to another apart, and afterwards that other should come down from the mount and repeat the Lord's words to the people.

This sufficient reason is supported by another most weighty fact, namely, that *God cannot commune with men because of their sin*. God was pleased to regard his people Israel at the foot of Sinai as pure. "Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes." They had abstained for awhile from defiling actions, and as they stood outside the bounds they were ceremonially clean; but it was only a ceremonial purity. Before long they were really unclean before the Lord, and in heart defiled and polluted. The Lord said of them, "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" He knew that their heart was not right even when they spoke obediently. Not many days after the people had trembled at Sinai they made a golden calf, and set it up and bowed before it, and provoked the Lord to jealousy so that he sent plagues among them. It is quite clear that after such a rebellion, after a deliberate breach of his covenant, under daring violation of his commands, it would have been quite impossible for God to speak to them, or for them to listen to the voice of God, in a direct manner. They would have fled before him because of his holiness, which shamed their unholiness; and because of their sin, which provoked his indignation, because of the wandering, and instability, and treachery of their hearts, the Lord could not have endured them in his presence. Oh no, my brethren, with such a sense of sin as some of us have, and as all of us ought to have, we should have to cover our faces, and cower down in terror, if Jehovah himself were to appear. He cannot look upon iniquity, neither can evil dwell with him, for he is a consuming fire. While we are compassed with infirmity we cannot behold him, for our eyes are dimmed with the smoke of our iniquities. If we would see even the skirts of his garments we must first be pure in heart, and he must put us in the cleft of the rock, and cover us with his hand.

God's face is not to be seen. An occasional glimpse may come to spirits raised above their own natural level, so that they can for awhile behold the King, the Lord of hosts; but even to them it is a terrible strain upon all their powers, the wine is too strong for the bottles. What said John, when he saw, not so

I shall behold the year of my redeemed come, I shall shout my triumph in the delivery of all my beloved! Aye, and I shall see then, the world, mine own earth conquered, and usurpers all dethroned, and I shall behold in vision the glories of the latter days, when I shall sit upon the throne of my father David and judge the earth, attended with the pomp of angels and the shouts of my beloved!"

But, now, secondly, CHRIST HAS ANOTHER LIFTING UP, not ignominious, but truly honourable; there is a lifting of him upon the pole of the Gospel, in the preaching of the Word. Christ Jesus is to be lifted up every day; for that purpose he came into the world: "That like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," even so he might by the preaching of the truth be lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is the minister's great theme, in opposition to a thousand other things which most men choose. I would prefer that the most prominent feature in my ministry should be the preaching of Christ Jesus. Christ should be most prominent, *not hell and damnation*. God's ministers must preach God's terrors as well as God's mercies; we are to preach the thunder of God's law. If men will sin, we are to tell them that they must be punished for it. We should be unfaithful to the solemn charge which God has given us if we were wickedly to stifle all the threatenings of God's word. Did the loving Saviour talk of the pit that burneth, of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that can never be extinguished? It is ours to speak as he spake, and not to mince the matter. It is no mercy to men to hide their doom. But, my brethren, terrors never ought to be the prominent feature of a minister's preaching. Many old divines thought they would do a great deal of good by preaching this. I do not believe it. Some souls are awakened and terrified by such preaching; they, however, are but few. Sometimes, right solemnly, the sacred mysteries of eternal wrath must be preached, but far oftener let us preach the wondrous love of God. There are more souls won by wooing than by threatening. It is not hell, but Christ, we desire to preach.

Again, the theme of a minister should be Christ Jesus in opposition to *mere doctrine*. Some of my good brethren are always preaching doctrine. Well, they are right in so doing,

but I would not care myself to have as the characteristic of my preaching, doctrine only. I would rather have it said, "He dwelt much upon the person of Christ, and seemed best pleased when he began to tell about the atonement and the sacrifice. He was not ashamed of the doctrines, he was not afraid of threatening, but he seemed as if he preached the threatening with tears in his eyes, and the doctrine solemnly as God's own word; but when he preached of Jesus his tongue was loosed, and his heart was at liberty."

Brethren, there are some men who preach the doctrine only, who are an injury, I believe, to God's church rather than a benefit. I know of men who have set themselves up as umpires over all spirits. They are *the* men. Wisdom will die with them. If they were once taken away the great standard of truth would be removed. We do not wonder that they hate the Pope, two of a trade never agree, for they are far more popish than he, they being themselves infallible. I am afraid that very much of the soundness of this age is but a mere sound, and is not real; does not enter into the core of the heart, nor affect the being. Brethren, we would rather preach Christ than election. We love the great doctrines of God's word, but we had rather preach Christ than preach these.

And again, the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to *mere morality*. How many ministers in London could preach as well out of Shakespeare as the Bible, for all they want is a moral maxim. The good man never thinks of mentioning regeneration. He sometimes talks of moral renovation. He does not think of talking about perseverance by grace. No; continuance in well-doing is his perpetual cry. He does not think of preaching "believe and be saved." No: his continual exhortation is, "Good Christian people, say your prayers, and behave well, and by these means you shall enter the kingdom of heaven." The sum and substance of his Gospel is that we can do very well without Christ, that although certainly there is a little amiss in us, yet if we just mend our ways in some little degree, that old text, "except a man be born again," need not trouble us. Hear the testimony of holy Bishop Lavington, "We have long been attempting to reform the nation by moral preaching. With what effect? None. On the contrary, we have

should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." He prevailed with God by his pleading, for he identified himself with Israel. Moses did, as it were, gather up all their griefs and sorrows into himself, even as did our Lord. True Israelite was he, for he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and cast in his lot with the people of God. This is just what our blessed Lord has done. He will not have honour apart from his people, nor even life, unless they live also. He saved others, himself he could not save. He would not be in heaven, and leave his saints behind. He loved the people and so proved himself to be one chosen out of their midst, a brother among brethren.

Mark well that, while thus our Lord is our brother, the great God has in his person sent us one who is lifted up above us all in the knowledge of his mind. Thus saith the Lord (v. 18), "I will put my words in his mouth." Our Lord Jesus Christ comes to us inspired by God. Not alone cometh he, nor of his own mind; but saith he, "The Father is with me: I do always the things which please him: the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Both in word and work he acted for his Father, and under his Father's inspiration. Men and brethren, I beseech you not to reject the message which Jesus brings, seeing it is not his own, but the sure message of God. Trifle not with a single word which Jesus speaks, for it is the word of the Eternal One: despise not one single deed which he did, or precept which he command, or blessing which he brought, for upon all these there is the stamp of deity. God chose one who is our brother that he might come near to us; but he put his own royal imprimatur upon him, that we might not have an ambassador of second rank, but one who counts it not robbery to be equal with God, who nevertheless for our sake has taken upon himself the form of a servant that he might speak home to our hearts.

The main point, however, upon which I want to dwell is, that Jesus is like to Moses. There had been no better mediator found than Moses up to Moses' day; the Lord God, therefore, determined to work upon that model with the great prophet of his race, and he has done so in sending forth the Lord Jesus. It

would be a very interesting task for the young people to work out all the points in which Moses is a personal type of the Lord Jesus. The points of resemblance are very many, for there is hardly a single incident in the life of the great Lawgiver which is not symbolical of the promised Saviour.

I can only mention in what respects, as a Mediator, Jesus is like to Moses, and surely one is found in the fact that Moses beyond all that went before him was *peculiarly the depository of the mind of God*. Once and again we find him closeted with God for forty days at a time. He went right away from men to the lone mountain-top, and there he was forty days and forty nights, and did neither eat nor drink, but lived in high communion with his God. In those times of seclusion he received the pattern of the tabernacle, the laws of the priesthood, of the sacrifices of the holy days, and of the civil estate of Israel, and perhaps the early records which compose the book of Genesis. To whom else had God ever spoken for that length of time, as a man speaketh with his friend? He was the peculiar favourite of God. From the first day of his call, when he was keeping his father's flock at the back of the desert, right to the day when God kissed away his soul on the top of Nebo, he was a man greatly beloved, to whom God manifested himself as to no other. Hear the Lord's own words to Aaron and Miriam. "And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

In this our Lord Jesus is like to Moses, only he far surpasses him, for the intercourse between Christ and the Father was very much more intimate, seeing that Jesus is himself essential deity, and "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Cold mountains and the midnight air continually witnessed to his communion with the Father. Nor these alone, for he abode with the Father. His language was always spoken out as God was speaking within him; he lived in God, and with God. "I know," said he, "that thou hearest me always."

Instead of having to point out when Christ was in communion with the Father, we have rather, with astonishment, to point out the solitary moment when he was left of the Father, even that dread hour when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Only for that once the Father had left him, and even then it was inexplicable, and he asked the reason for it; though he knew himself to be then suffering as the Substitute for man, yet did his desertion by God come upon him as a novelty which utterly overwhelmed him, so that he asked in agony why he was forsaken.

Moses, to take another point, is the first of the prophets *with whom God kept up continuous revelation*. To other men he spake in dreams and visions, but to Moses by plain and perpetual testimony. His Spirit rested on him, and he took of it to give thereof to Joshua, and to the seventy elders, even as Jesus gave of his Spirit to the Apostles. Sometimes God spake to Noah, or to Abraham and others; but it was upon occasions only; and even then, as in the case of Abraham and Jacob, they must fall asleep to see and hear him best: but with Moses the Lord abode perpetually; whensoever he willed he consulted the Most High, and at once God spake with him, and directed his way. So was it with Christ Jesus. He needed not to behold a vision: the spirit of prophecy did not occasionally come upon him, and bear him out of himself, for the Spirit was given him without measure, and he knew the very mind and heart of God perpetually. He was always a prophet; not sometimes a prophet. At all times the Spirit rested upon him: he spake in the abiding power of the Holy Ghost, even more so than did Moses.

Moses is described as a prophet *mighty in word and deed*, and it is singular that there never was another prophet mighty in word and deed till Jesus came. Moses not only spoke with matchless power, but wrought miracles. You shall find no other prophet who did both. Other prophets who spake well wrought no miracles, or only here and there; whilst those who wrought miracles, such as Elijah and Elisha, have left us but few words that they spake: indeed, their prophecies were but lightning flashes, and not as the bright shining of a sun. When you come to our Lord Jesus you find lip and heart working together, with equal perfectness of witness. You cannot tell

in which he is the more marvellous, in his speech or in his act. "Never man spake like this man," but certainly never man wrought such marvels of mercy as Jesus did. He far exceeds Moses and all the prophets put together in the variety and the multitude and the wonderful character of the miracles which he did. If men bow before prophets who can cast down their rods, and they become serpents, if they yield homage to prophets who call fire from heaven, how much more should they accept him whose words are matchless music, and whose miracles of love were felt even beyond the boundaries of this visible world; for the angels of God flew from heaven to minister to him, the devils of the pit fled before his voice, and the caverns of death heard his call and yielded up their prey. Who would not accept this prophet like unto Moses, to whom the Holy Ghost bare witness by mighty signs and wonders?

Moses, again, was *the founder of a great system of religious law*, and this was not the case with any other but the Lord Jesus. He founded the whole system of the Aaronic priesthood and the law that went with it. Moses was a law-giver: he gave the ten commandments in the name of God, and all the other statutes of the Jewish polity were ordained through him. Now, till you come to Christ you find no such law-giver; but Jesus institutes the new covenant as Moses introduced the old, the sermon on the mount was an utterance from a happier Sinai, and whereas Moses gives this and that command, Jesus gives the like in sweeter form and in diviner fashion, and embodies it in his own sacred person. He is the great legislator of our dispensation, the King in the midst of Jeshurun, giving forth his command which runneth very swiftly, and they that fear the Lord are obedient thereunto.

Time will fail us, or we would mention to you that *Moses was faithful before God* as a servant over all his house, and so was Jesus as a Son over his own house. He was never unfaithful to his charge in any respect, but in all things ruled and served to perfection as the anointed of the Father. He is the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Moses, too, was *zealous for God* and for his honour. Remember how the zeal of God's house did eat him up. When he saw grievous sin among the people, he said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and there came to him the tribe of Levi, and he said, "Go in and out,

and slay ye every one his men that were joined to Baal-peor." Herein he was the stern type of Jesus, who took the scourge of small cords, and drove out the buyers and sellers, and said, "Take these things hence: it is written, My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves"; for the zeal of God's house had eaten him up.

Moses, by divine grace, was *very meek*, and perhaps this is the chief parallel between him and Jesus. I have said, "by divine grace," for I suppose by nature he was strongly passionate. There are many indications that Moses was not meek, but very far from it until the Spirit of God rested upon him. He slew the Egyptian hastily, and in after years he went out from the presence of Pharaoh "in great anger." Once and again you find him very wroth: he took the tables of stone and dashed them in pieces in his indignation, for "Moses' anger waxed hot"; and that unhappy action which occasioned his being shut out of Canaan was caused by his "being provoked in spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips," and said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must I fetch you water out of this rock?" Divine grace had so cooled and calmed him that in general he was the gentlest of men, and when his brother and sister thrust themselves into his place and questioned his authority, it is written, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." In his own quarrel he had never anything to say: it is only for the people and for God that his anger waxeth hot. Even about his last act of hastiness he says, "God was angry with me for your sake," not for his own sake. He was so meek and gentle that for forty years he bore with the most rebellious and provoking nation that ever existed.

But what shall I say of my Master? Let him speak of himself. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Our children call him "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." The man Jesus is very meek above all men that are upon the face of the earth. He has his indignation—

"Like glowing oven is his wrath,
As flame by furious blast upblown,"

for he can be angry, and the wrath of the Lamb is the most awful wrath beneath the sun; but still to us, in this Gospel day, he is all love and tenderness; and when he bids us come to him, can we refuse to hear? So meek is the Mediator that he is love itself, incarnate love; so loving, that when he died his only crime was that he was "found guilty of excess of love"; can we be so cruel as to reject him?

Our Lord was like to Moses in meekness, and then to sum up all—Moses was *the Mediator for God with the people*, and so is our blessed Lord. Moses came in God's name to set Israel free from Pharaoh's bondage, and he did it: Jesus came to set us free from a worse bondage still, and he has achieved our freedom. Moses led the people through the Red Sea, and Jesus has led us where all the hosts of hell were overthrown, and sin was drowned in his own most precious blood. Moses led the tribes through the wilderness, and Jesus leads us through the weary ways of this life to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Moses spake to the people for God, and Jesus hath done the same. Moses spake to God for the people, and Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us. Moses proposed himself as a sacrifice when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the book of life"; but Jesus was an actual sacrifice, and was taken away from the land of the living for our sakes, being made a curse for us. Moses, in a certain sense, died for the people, for he could not enter into the land, but must needs close his eyes on Nebo. Those are touching words, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes": words which in a diviner sense may be fitly applied to Jesus, for God was angry with him for our sakes. Right through to the very end our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is a prophet like unto Moses, raised up from the midst of his brethren.

I close with that point, and if my words are very few let them be weighty. Let us think of THE AUTHORITY of our great Mediator, and let this be the practical lesson—Hear ye him. Men and brethren, if our hearts were right, the moment it was announced that God would speak to us through Jesus Christ there would be a rush to hear him. If sin had not maddened men they would listen eagerly to every word of God through such a Mediator as Jesus is; they would write each golden sentence on their tablets, they would hoard his word in their

memories, they would wear it between their eyes, they would yield their hearts to it. Alas, it is not so; and the saddest thing of all is that some talk of Jesus for gain, and others hear of him as if his story were a mere tale or an old Jewish ballad of eighteen hundred years ago. Yet, remember, God speaks by Jesus still, and every word of his that is left on record is as solemnly alive to-day as when it first leaped from his blessed lips. I beseech you remember Christ cometh not as an amateur, but he hath authority with him: this ambassador to men wears the authority of the King of kings. If ye despise him ye despise him that sent him: if ye turn away from him that speaketh from heaven ye turn away from the eternal God, and ye do despite to his love. Oh, do not so.

Note how my text puts it. It saith here, "Whosoever shall not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, *I will require it of him.*" My heart trembles while I repeat to you the words, "I will require it of him." To-day God graciously requires it of some of you, and asks why you have not listened to Christ's voice. Why is this? You have not accepted his salvation. Why is this? You know all about Jesus, and you say it is true, but you have never believed in him: why is this? God requires it of you. Many years has he waited patiently, and he has sent his servant again and again to invite you. The men of Nineveh sought mercy in their day, and yet you have not repented. God requires it of you. Why is this? Give your Maker a reason for your rejection of his mercy if you can: fashion some sort of excuse, O ye rebellious one. Do you despise your God? Do you dare his wrath? Do you defy his anger? Are you so mad as this?

The day will come when he will require it of you in a much more violent sense than he does to-day; when you shall have passed beyond the region of mercy he will say, "I called you and you refused, why is this? I did not speak to you in thunder. I spoke to you with the gentle voice of the Only Begotten who bled and died for men: why did you not hear him? Every Sabbath day my servant tried to repeat the language of his Master to you: why did you refuse it? You are cast into hell, but why did not you accept the pardon which would have delivered you from it?" You were too busy. Too busy to remember your God? What could you have been busy about

that was worth a thought as compared with him? You were too fond of pleasure. And do you dare insult your God by saying that trifling amusements which were not worth the mentioning could stand in comparison with his love and his good pleasure?

I pray you consider what this meaneth, "I will require it of him." You who still harden your hearts, and refuse my Master, go away with this ringing in your ears, "I will require it of him! I will require it of him." "When he lieth dying alone in that sick chamber I will require it of him: when he hath taken the last plunge, and left this world, and finds himself in eternity, I will require it of him: and when the thunder wakes the dead, and the great Prophet like unto Moses shall sit on the great white throne to judge the quick and the dead, I will require it of him, I will require it of him."

If you will rush upon eternal woe, if you will despise the altogether lovely One through whom God speaks to you, if you will live day after day carelessly and wantonly, throwing away your souls, oh, then mine eyes shall weep in secret places for you; but what more can I do but leave you to God?

XIV

"WE HAVE A HIGH PRIEST"

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—Hebrews 4 : 15.

BELOVED, we have a *High Priest*. All that Israel had under the law we still retain ; only we have the substance, of which they had only the shadow. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" : we have a sacrifice, which, being once offered, for ever avails ; we have "one greater than the temple," and he is to us the mercy-seat and the High Priest. Take it for granted that all the blessings of the law remain under the Gospel. Christ has restored that which he took not away ; but he has not taken away one single possible blessing of the law ; on the contrary, he has secured all to his people. I look to the Old Testament, and I see certain blessings appended to the covenant of works, and I say to myself by faith, "Those blessings are mine, for I have kept the covenant of works in the person of my Covenant Head and Surety. Every blessing which is promised to perfect obedience belongs to me, since I present to God a perfect obedience in the person of my great Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ." Every real spiritual boon which Israel had, you have as a Christian.

Note, next, not only do we read that there is a High Priest, but in the fourteenth verse we read, "*We have a high priest.*" It would be a small matter to us to know that such and such blessings existed ; the great point is to know by faith that we personally possess them. What is the great High Priest to me unless he is mine ? What is a Saviour but a word to tantalize my despairing spirit, until I can say that this Saviour is mine ? Every blessing of the covenant is prized in proportion as it is *had* : "We have a High Priest." I pray you, never talk of the blessings and doctrines of grace as matters apart from personal

possession, but seek habitually to enjoy and experience them. That was a grand exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord, and my God"; and this is a sweet word for the saints—"We have a High Priest." Beloved, come boldly to the throne, for you have a High Priest. Grasp firmly by faith the choice favours which your interest in the Lord Jesus secures to you.

It is precious to reflect that Jesus, as High Priest, is still ours, though, according to the text, he "*is passed into the heavens.*" He does not forget us now that he has passed through the lower heavens into the heaven of heavens, where he reigns supreme in his Father's glory. He is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Though he has left behind him all pain, and suffering, and infirmity, he retains to the full the fellow-feeling which his life of humiliation has developed in him. Think of our High Priest as not having laid aside that breast-plate of his on which our names are jewelled, nor the "two onyx stones, set in pouches of gold," which he wore upon his shoulders, inscribed in the self-same manner. On his heart and on his shoulder our exalted High Priest bears all his people: his heart and his arm are both engaged for them: his love and his power are engrossed by them. Our Lord carries in his pierced hands, and feet, and side, the memorials of his redeemed, as it is written, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

Observe here that the Apostle delights to dwell upon the majesty and glory of our High Priest. What does he say? "Seeing then that we have a *great* High Priest," as if Aaron and all his sons were little personages compared with him. In Jesus, the Son of God, we have "a great High Priest." The long succeeding line of priests called of God to stand before him in the holy place on earth, have all passed away; but we have "a great High Priest," seeing he never dies. These men were all faulty; but we have a "great High Priest," who is absolutely perfect.

He is "the great High Priest," for he has passed, not within a material veil into some inner sanctuary encompassed with curtains, but into the heavens, where God dwelleth. His name is *Jesus*. There is his manhood: he was born of a woman to save his people from their sins. But we read further, "*Jesus, the Son of God.*" There is his Deity. He is the Only-begotten of the Father: as glorious in his Godhead as he is gracious in his manhood.

Paul delights to dwell upon these points of glory. But when he has done so, it seems to occur to him that when we consider the greatness of our High Priest some poor trembling sinners may be afraid to draw nigh to him; and the Apostle ever has a longing eye towards drawing souls to Jesus. Therefore, he falls back upon our Lord's tenderness. Great as he is, our High Priest is not one who "cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He puts a negative on that fear which might naturally arise in trembling bosoms. Let no man be afraid of him who is the embodiment of gentleness and compassion. Though conscious of your own infirmities, you may feel free to come to him, who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

I begin by saying of our blessed Lord, HE HAS ASSUMED A VERY TENDER OFFICE. If the office of high priest had been fully carried out, as it ought to have been, it would have been one of the most tenderly helpful that could have been devised. A king may render great aid to the unhappy; but, on the other hand, he is a terror to evil-doers: a high priest is in the highest sense "ordained for men," and he is the friend and succourer of the most wretched.

It was intended, first, that *by the high priest God should commune with men*. That needs a person of great tenderness. A mind that is capable of listening to God, and understanding, in a measure, what he teaches, had need be very tender, so as to interpret the lofty sense into the lowly language of humanity. If the man is to come from among the infinities down to the ignorance and narrow capacities of mortal men, he had need be tender as a nurse to her children. Great philosophers have not always been great teachers: their very profundity has prevented their translating their great thoughts into the speech of common minds. There is a possibility of knowing so much that the knowledge becomes crowded up, and there remains no possible gate for the orderly going out of such a multitude of thoughts. Great knowledge needs great patience if it would instruct the ignorant.

Now, the high priest had to be a man who could commune with God, and hearken to the sacred oracle; and then he was bound to come out to commonplace-men of the wilderness, or men of the farm, and tell them what he had heard in secret from the infinite God. He must mediate, and allow his mouth to

be God's mouth to the people—for "the priest's lips should keep knowledge." What he had grasped from the Lord he must so put that the people could grasp it and act upon it. This is what our Lord has done in the tenderest manner. He reveals the Father. The things of God which he knoweth he makes known unto us by his Holy Spirit, as we are able to bear them. We are to learn of him. Some say that they will go from nature up to nature's God; they will do no such thing—the steps are much too steep for their feeble climbing; they fall into some such abyss of absurdity as evolution, and come not nigh to God. You have not to go from Jesus Christ to God, for he himself is God. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." Come, then, and learn of the great High Priest. His office itself is a compassionate one, and you may learn all of God from him the more readily because he is meek and lowly of heart, and will count it no drudgery to teach you the very A B C of divine truth.

But a high priest took the other side also: *he was to communicate with God from men*. Here, also, he needed the tenderest spirit to rule his faculties and to move his affections. He must needs sit down and hear all the trembling petitions of troubled mothers who had come from the utmost end of Israel laden with their domestic burdens; he must listen to all the complaints of the oppressed, the woes of the afflicted, the trials of the poor, the perplexities of the distracted; and then, as a man of God, he was ordained to take all these things in prayer before the Most High, and in fitter language to present the requests of the broken in heart. What a tender office! How few could carry it out! Even some well-meaning ministers do not seem able to enter into the struggles of a seeking sinner, or into the conflicts of a tempted soul. Those who go to them that they may enjoy their intercessions are disappointed. Our High Priest is quite at home with mourners, and enters into their case as a good physician understands the symptoms of his patients. When we tell our Lord the story of our inward grief, he understands it better than we do. He rightly reads our case, and then wisely presents it before the Majesty on high, pleading his sacrifice, that the Lord may deal graciously with us. Beloved, this is what Jesus Christ will do for all who desire to speak with God. He is the "Interpreter, one of a thousand," by whom our

sighs will be reported to heaven. If you wish to communicate your needs to the great Father, who is able to help in time of need, here is the ambassador between earth and heaven who can plead the cause of your soul at that throne from which succour ever comes.

But if I understand the high priest's office aright, he had many things to do which come under this general description, but which might not suggest themselves, if you did not have the items set before you. The high priest was one who had *to deal with sin and judgment for the people*. We read in Exodus 28: 29, "Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually." In consequence, he was called upon to hear confessions of sin, and pleadings for pardon. Many came to him and acknowledged known transgressions, or wished for aid in discovering sins of ignorance. As God's representative, he judged the errors of those who came to offer sacrifice for this sins, and helped them to deal rightly in the things of God. This is a very tender post to occupy. No mere man is fitted to hear, as a rule, the confessions of all sorts of people, and certainly, he should not seek to do so. Yet the man whom God calls to feed his flock is forced, at times, to enter into the soul-conflicts of his fellow-men, and to hear the mournful story of their wanderings; and he needs great tenderness in so doing. We have a High Priest into whose ear we may pour all the confessions of our penitence without fear. Go and do so. It is a wonderful easement to the mind to tell Jesus all. Men who have consciences that tear them to pieces will find perfect repose follow upon a full pouring out of their soul before the Lord Jesus. Our merciful High Priest will never make a harsh observation, nor ask a rasping question, nor pronounce a crushing sentence. Go to him only, for there is none like him. He will come so near to you, that you shall unburden your soul at his feet.

No doubt the high priest was resorted to, *that he might console the sorrowful*. It must have been a great relief for those who were of a sorrowful spirit, to go unto the sanctuary of the Lord, and sit at the feet of a man of God, who could remind the stricken one of the promises made to meet such sorrow. Only to tell the story was helpful. Mourners often get more comfort from telling their griefs than they do from the remarks of those

to whom they unbosom themselves. Go to Jesus if a sharp grief is now gnawing at your heart. If it be a trouble which you could not tell to your father or your husband, go to Jesus with it. That holy woman, Hannah, when she sat in the court of the Lord's house, got but little at first from Eli: she was telling her Lord her secret, and the aged priest thought that she was drunken, because her lips were moving, and she spake not aloud. He rebuked her roughly. But when she explained herself, then he bade her go in peace, for her prayer would be granted her; and she went away no more sad.

Jesus will make no mistake as to your meaning, even though you should be as one drunken with sorrow. Go to your chamber all alone, tell Jesus your trouble, and he will meet it in the fullness of his compassion and wisdom. Through him the Comforter shall come to you, and your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Try it.

The high priest would hear, also, *the desires and wishes of the people*. When men in Israel had some great longing, some overwhelming desire, they not only prayed in private, but they would make a journey up to the temple to ask the high priest their petitions before the Lord. Hannah only told Eli her heart's longing after it had been gratified; for she could not have summoned courage to mention so special a desire to a man who had so harshly judged her. She had evidently gone to Shiloh to make petition for a child, since her husband's other wife had been cruel to her because of her barrenness. She told Eli that the Lord had heard her, and then she consulted him as to the dedication of her son to the Lord. You may have some very peculiar, delicate desire as to spiritual things that only God and your own soul may know; but fear not to mention it to your tender High Priest, who will know your meaning, and deal graciously with you.

It was the high priest's business *to instruct and to reprove the people*. To instruct is delightful; but to reprove is difficult. Only a tender spirit can wisely utter rebuke. Israel's high priest needed to be meek as Moses in his rebukes of the erring. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us our faults in tones of love. His rebukes never break the heart. He never upbraids in bitterness, though he does so in faithfulness. Oh, the tenderness of Christ! I feel my subject deeply, but I cannot speak it as I

would. He has been most gracious in correcting me. I know his word is true: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." We can take anything from Jesus: his hands make the bitter sweet. There are men whom you would shun in the hour of your wounding, even though you believe that they would do their best to help you; for you do not feel that you could reveal your heart to them, nor feel happy to be under obligation to them. Their kindness is hard and cold; their counsel is without the sweetening of fellow-feeling. They are as keen as a sword, and as cutting. It may be, they are so much above us that we cannot reach up to them, nor expect them to reach down to us. But there are other men, blessed among their fellows, who seem to be like havens for ships: you rejoice to cast anchor under their lee. You feel, "I could tell that man anything. I know that he would have patience with me, and pity for me, and that his heart would go out towards me."

Now you will often be disappointed if you select a man or woman to be your confidante; but if you will resort to the Lord Jesus, whom God has commissioned to be a High Priest for this very end and purpose, you will find him just the friend you need. He loves the troubled, for "in all their affliction he was afflicted." He is very careful of the feeble-minded, and of the little ones; for is it not written—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young"? When circumstances are peculiarly trying, Jesus is peculiarly tender. When we are grieved, he is gentle. Did you ever hear any of his people say of their Lord, that he is overbearing? Did his spouse, in the song, ever say that her Beloved had a rough side to his hand, or a cold place in his heart? He can and does chide, for his love is wise; but he is very pitiful, and his love knows no limit. His heart is made of tenderness, and his soul melteth for love of his chosen.

Now, secondly, as our Lord Jesus has a tender office, so, next, HE HAS A TENDER FEELING. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Note that it is not said, "touched *by*," but touched *with*. Many a man can be touched *by* the sorrow of another, but he is not touched *with* that sorrow. He has feeling, but not fellow-feeling. He pities the sorrowing, but he does not sorrow with them. How many of

the rich are sorry for the poor ; but they were never poor themselves, so they may be touched *by* the woe of poverty, but they are not touched *with* a fellow-feeling for it. Our Lord is touched *with* a feeling of our infirmities. You are touched, and he is touched, at the same time. A pang shoots through my heart : that pang has been felt by my Lord also. A grief has stirred the waters of my spirit, and the spirit of the great High Priest has moved in harmony therewith. They say, but I know not that it is true, that when the strings of one harp are touched, if there be another harp in the room, it gently responds in unison, though not touched by any hand ; assuredly it is so with the believer and his Lord. Touch any one of his members, and you touch the Head of the spiritual body.

It is not merely true that he is apprised of our infirmities, since the Lord has said, "I know their sorrows"; but he "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hold that thought ! It is a great matter that our God should note the trials of his people, that his condescending omniscience should concern itself with their every-day distresses ; but this word goes further : he feels with his people : is "touched with the *feeling* of our infirmities." The sense of feeling is more intense, vivid, and acute than the sense of sight. It is one thing to see pain, but another thing to be touched with the feeling of it.

Note again, "The feeling of *our* infirmities." Whose infirmities ? Does not "our" mean yours and mine ? Jesus is touched with the feeling of your infirmities and mine. You, my venerable brother, and you, my younger sister ; you who have come hither from a new-made grave, and you that will return to a bed shortly to be emptied of your dearest one ; you that are slandered, and you that are sick ; you that can scarce hold up your head for sadness, and you that are distracted with fear : he is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

Note well that word "infirmities"—"touched with the feeling of our *infirmities*." If it had only said sorrows, there would have been a sound of the sublime about it ; but he stoops to "infirmities." He is not only touched with the feeling of the heroic endurance of the martyrs, but he sympathizes with those of you who are no heroes, but can only plead, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." While you are entreating the Lord thrice to take away the thorn in the flesh he is sympathizing with

you. It is not well that it does not say, touched with the feeling of our patience? our self-denial, our valour? but "with the feeling of our infirmities"; that is, our weakness, our littleness, the points in which we are not strong nor happy. Our pain, our depression, our trembling, our sensitiveness; he is touched with these, though he falls not into the sin which too often comes of them. As the mother feels with the weakness of her babe, so does Jesus feel with the poorest, saddest and weakest of his chosen.

How comes this about, brethren? Let us think of it a while! *Our Lord has a tender nature.* Some people are not sympathetic, and never will be; their spirit is not generous. We are all made of clay; but some clay is stiffer and more gritty than another; and very hard grit it is in some cases. Some men have no more feeling than granite. They will say about the collection, "I shall not give anything to the hospitals. Let the people take care of themselves. If they were more thrifty they would have a little laid by for a rainy day, and would not need to have hospitals provided for them." This gentleman can supply wagon-loads of the same sort of hard material. I know you, my friend, I have known you, too, a long time. I was going to say, "I would be happy to attend your funeral"; but I will not say so, lest it seem that I am hardening myself under your influence; and besides, there are so many of your order, that one more or less is of no great consequence. You know the people who are always grizzling against charity, and finding a shilling's-worth of reasons why they should not give a penny. Such people will not willingly put anything into the box: but as it will come round to them, possibly they will do so for fear of being known. Jesus our Lord is tender by nature. Amid the bliss of heaven he foresaw the miseries of earth, and resolved to leave his glory that he might come here to rescue man.

Our Lord is not only tender of nature, but *quick of understanding as to the infirmities of men.* Want of sense often prevents men being sensitive and sympathetic. If you have never suffered under disease, you need a little imagination to realize it, so as to be touched with the feeling of it. Suppose the squire of the parish, who thinks ten or twelve shillings abundant wages for a week, should say to his lady, "We have always said that our agricultural labourers have quite enough money to live upon; let us try their fare. We will leave this house for a

week and take one of the old cottages in the village; and live, all of us, on the wage we pay our men." What a capital school for social economy! How well would some people know the value of our silver currency, and of the copper coinage also! Only we should like members of parliament to have a longer experience than one week, lest it might be a pleasant change from feasting to fasting. Say six months for the honourable member! This might foster sympathy. Our blessed Lord had real experience; and, beside that, the faculty of being able to put himself into the place of sufferers, and so to be "acquainted with grief."

Too many people are so *wrapped up in their own grief* that they have no room in their souls for sympathy. Do you not know them? The first thing when they rise in the morning, is the dreadful story of the night they have passed. Ah, dear! and they have not quite eaten a hearty breakfast, before their usual pain is somewhere or other coming over them. They must have the special care and pity of the whole household. All the day long the one great business is to keep everybody aware of how much the great sufferer is enduring. It is this person's patent right to monopolize all the sympathy which the market can supply, and then there will be none to spare for the rest of the afflicted. If you are greatly taken up with self, there is not enough of you to run over to anybody else. How different this from our Lord, who never cried, "Have pity upon me! Have pity upon me, O my friends!" He is described as "enduring the cross, despising the shame." So strong was he in love, that, though he saved others, himself he could not save; though he succoured the afflicted, none succoured him.

Men who are *wrapped up in their own glories* are not sympathetic. Is it not a fine thing to spend life in contemplating one's own magnificence? Those who are amazed at their own greatness have no thought to spare for the suffering. "No," says the man, "the masses must obey the laws of supply and demand, and get on as well as they can. Let them do as I have done. I might have been as poor as they are, if I had shown as little push and enterprise as they do." The gentleman talks on a great scale, and he has no sympathy for the small woes of common life. His sympathy is wanted at home; and his charity begins there, and is so satisfied with its beginning that it never

goes any further. Our Lord is at the opposite pole from all this. He never glorified himself: he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant"; thus displaying the tenderness of his heart.

Let me say, once more, our Lord is tender to us without any effort; not only because of the reasons I have mentioned, but because *he has made our cause his own*. We are his friends; and does not a friend act tenderly to a friend? We are more than that, we are married to him; and shall not a husband be tender to his spouse? More than that, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones"; and shall not the head feel every pain of the members? It must be so. Jesus has so identified himself with his own redeemed, that he must evermore be in living, loving, lasting sympathy with them.

I must notice, in the third place, that OUR LORD HAD A TENDER TRAINING. Hear what he says of it. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Beloved, *our Lord was tried as we are*; that is one meaning of the passage. As to all manner of *bodily* ills, he was subject to them all. Hungry, weary, faint, without a place whereon to lay his head, he was tried in all the points to which poverty exposes its victims. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Even to the death-sweat and the cry, "I thirst!" Jesus has gone along our pathway of pain and grief. No step of it has been spared him.

Our Lord has been tried *mentally*. There is never an exceeding heaviness, nor a sore amazement, nor a wound of treachery, nor a stab of ingratitude, of which he did not feel the like. The sharpest arrows in the quiver of anguish have been shot at his dear heart. "Oh," says one, "I do not think anybody has been tried as I have been by cruel unkindness." Say not so, for Jesus was forsaken of all, and betrayed by the friend in whom he trusted.

As to *spiritual* distress, our Lord has been there also. Where any sinless foot could go, he has gone. The abyss has heard him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Tried in all points from above and from below, from without and from within, he can sympathize with every form of tribulation.

But the text says, "*tempted*," and that bears a darker meaning than "tried." Our Lord could never have fallen the victim

of temptation, but through life he was the object of it. He could never have been so tempted as that the sin of a temptation could spot his soul. Far from it. Yet remember that in the wilderness he was tempted to *unbelief*. The evil one said, "If thou be the Son of God." Most of us know how he can hiss that "if" into our ear. "If thou be the Son of God." Upon our Lord that "if" fell painfully but harmlessly. Then came the temptation to help himself and anticipate the providence of God by selfish action: "Command that these stones be made bread." We, too, have had this rash act suggested to us. The tempter has said, "You could get out of your difficulties by doing a wrong thing—do it. It is not a very wrong thing either; indeed, it is questionable whether it might not be justifiable under the circumstances. In vain will you wait for the Lord; put out your own hand and provide for yourself. The way of faith in God is slow, and you are in pressing need." Our Lord came just there. When no bread in the house is made the background of a great temptation remember that our Lord has undergone the counterpart of that temptation.

Next, the Lord Jesus was tempted to *presumption*. Set on the pinnacle of the temple, he heard a voice saying, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee." Are you haunted by a similar suggestion to presume? It is suggested that you quit your old standing and try the new notions, or that you speculate in business, or that you profess to understand what God has never taught you? Resist earnestly. Ah, your Lord knows all about this, and as he escaped that temptation, you shall do the same.

Then the fiend—how often I have wondered at him!—dared to say to Christ, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Picture the Lord of angels, with all the royalty of heaven shining on his brow, and the black fiend daring to say, "Fall down and worship *me*." It may be that a like temptation is coming home to you: live for gold, live for fame, live for pleasure: in some form or other, worship the devil and renounce faith in God. "Worship me," says the prince of evil: "take to the new doctrines, practise the current worldlinesses, leave the Word of God for the wisdom of the philosophers": in some such form will the temptation come; but even

though the fiend could fulfil his promise, and all the world should be ours, we are bound to resist unto death, and we are encouraged to do so by the fact that we are upon the old ground where our Redeemer fought and conquered. He can enter into the distress which this temptation is causing you; for he has felt the same.

I am happy to come to my last point. OUR LORD HAS A TENDER PERFECTNESS. As I read the verse—"In all points tempted like as we are, *yet without sin*," I thought I heard you say, "But that is just the pinch of the matter. He cannot sympathize with me in sin, and that is my great trouble." Brother, do you wish that your Lord had become a sinner like yourself? Abhor the idea! It would be blasphemy if understood and indulged. You see at once that you could not wish anything of the kind. But listen to me; do not imagine that if the Lord Jesus had sinned he would have been any more tender toward you; for *sin is always of a hardening nature*. If the Christ of God could have sinned, he would have lost the perfection of his sympathetic nature. It needs perfectness of heart to lay self all aside, and to be touched with a feeling of the infirmities of others.

Hearken again: do you not think that *sympathy in sin would be a poisonous sweet*? A child, for instance, has done wrong, and he has been wisely chastened by his father; I have known cases in which a foolish mother has sympathized with the child. This may seem affectionate, but it is wickedly injurious to the child. Such conduct would lead the child to love the evil which it is needful he should hate. Have you not felt yourself that, in unbelieving moments, it would have been a great evil for a Christian brother to have petted you in your unbelief; and that it was far better for you to have heard a bracing word of upbraiding? We ought not to wish for sympathy in wrong. Sympathy in sin is conspiracy in crime. We must show sympathy with sinners, but not with their sins. If, then, you dream that our Lord Jesus would have derived any gracious power to sympathize with us from himself sinning, you greatly err. Such sympathy, had it been possible, would have been to the last degree injurious to us. Inasmuch as he had no sin, we can drink in his words of comfort without fear. His oil and wine will bring no evil to our wounds. His holy experience comforts us, and

runs us into no risk. It is a blessed thing for a sinner to have the sympathies of one who never sinned. Rejoice, ye people of God; rejoice in this, that the sinless One has perfect sympathy with you in your infirmities. He sympathizes all the more graciously because he is without sin.

If our Lord was thus sympathetic, let us be tender to our fellow-men. Let us not restrain our tenderer feelings, but encourage them. Love is the brightest of the graces, and most sweetly adorns the Gospel. Love to the sorrowing, the suffering, the needy, is a charming flower, which grows in the garden of a renewed heart. Cultivate it! Make your love practical! Love the poor, not in word only, but in actual gifts to them! Love the sick, and help them to a cure! Will you allow the poor to pine in their narrow rooms? Shall they perish for lack of surgical care and medical help? Do you call yourselves followers of the tender Jesus? Do you hope to be saved through his compassion? I charge rich Christians to delay no longer, but to be touched with the feeling of the sufferings of those who are made of one flesh with them. Let all of us do our best. I will not insult you by pleading with you as though you were unwilling. You are eager to give for his dear sake who sympathizes with you so tenderly, and helps you so graciously.

XV

JESUS, THE KING OF TRUTH

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John 18: 37.

WE are told, by the Apostle Paul, that our Lord Jesus before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. It was a good confession as to the manner of it, for our Lord was truthful, gentle, prudent, patient, meek, and yet, withal, uncompromising, and courageous. His spirit was not cowed by Pilate's power, nor exasperated by his sneers. In his patience he possessed his soul, and remained the model witness for the truth—both in his silence and in his speech. He witnessed a good confession also, as to the matter of it; for, though he said but little, that little was all that was needful. He claimed his crown rights, and, at the same time, declared that his kingdom was not of this world, nor to be sustained by force. He vindicated both the spirituality and the essential truthfulness of his sovereignty.

If ever we should be placed in like circumstances, may we be able to witness a good confession too! We may never, like Paul, be made to plead before Nero; but, if we should, may the Lord stand by us, and help us to play the man before the lion! In our families, or among our business acquaintances, we may have to meet some little Nero, and answer to some petty Pilate; may we then also be true witnesses. O that we may have grace to be prudently silent or meekly outspoken, as the matter may require, in either case being faithful to our conscience and our God! May the sorrowful visage of Jesus, the faithful and true witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, be often before our eye, to check the first sign of flinching, and to inspire us with dauntless courage!

Note, first of all, that OUR LORD CLAIMED TO BE A KING. Pilate said, "Art thou a king, then?" asking the question with a sneering surprise that so poor a being should put forth a claim to royalty. Do you wonder that he should have marvelled greatly to find kingly claims associated with such a sorrowful condition? The Saviour answered, in effect, "It is even as thou sayest, I am a king." The question was but half earnest; the answer was altogether solemn: "I am a king." Nothing was ever uttered by our Lord with greater certainty and earnestness.

Now, notice, that our Lord's claim to be a king was made without the slightest ostentation or desire to be advantaged thereby. There were other times when, if he had said "I am a king," he might have been carried upon the shoulders of the people, and crowned amid general acclamations. His fanatical fellow countrymen would gladly have made him their leader at one time; and we read that they would have "taken him by force and made him a king." At such times he said but little about his Kingdom, and what he did say was uttered in parables, and explained only to his disciples when they were alone. Little enough did he say in his preaching concerning his birthright as the Son of David and a scion of the royal house of Judah; for he shrank from worldly honours, and disdained the vain glories of a temporal diadem. He who came in love to redeem men, had no ambition for the gewgaws of human sovereignty. But now, when he is betrayed by his disciple, accused by his countrymen, and in the hands of an unjust ruler; when no good can come of it to himself; when it will bring him derision rather than honour; he speaks out plainly and replies to his interrogator, "Thou sayest that I am a king."

Note well the clearness of our Lord's avowal; there was no mistaking his words: "I am a king." When the time has come for the truth to be spoken, our Lord is not backward in declaring it. Truth has her times most meet for speech, and her seasons for silence. We are not to cast our pearls before swine, but when the hour has come for speech we must not hesitate, but speak as with the voice of a trumpet, giving forth a certain sound, that no man may mistake us. So, though a prisoner given up to die, the Lord boldly declares his royalty, though Pilate would pour derision upon him in consequence thereof. O, for the Master's prudence to speak the truth at the right time, and

for the Master's courage to speak it when the right time has come.

Our Lord's claim to royalty must have sounded very singularly in Pilate's ear. Jesus was, doubtless, very much careworn, sad, and emaciated in appearance. He had spent the first part of the night in the garden in an agony; in the midnight hours he had been dragged from Annas to Caiaphas, and from Caiaphas to Herod; neither at daybreak had he been permitted to rest, so that, from sheer weariness, he must have looked very unlike a king. If you had taken some poor ragged creature in the street, and said to him, "Art thou a king, then?" the question could scarcely have been more sarcastic. Pilate, in his heart, despised the Jews as such, but here was a poor Jew, persecuted by his own people, helpless and friendless; it sounded like mockery to talk of a kingdom in connection with him. Yet never earth saw truer king! None of the line of Pharaoh, the family of Nimrod, or the race of the Cæsars, was so intrinsically imperial in himself as he, or so deservedly reckoned a king among men by virtue of his descent, his achievements, or his superior character. The carnal eye could not see this, but to the spiritual eye it is clear as noonday. To this day, pure Christianity, in its outward appearance, is an equally unattractive object, and wears upon its surface few royal tokens. It is without form or comeliness, and when men see it, there is no beauty that they should desire it. True, there is a nominal Christianity which is accepted and approved of men, but the pure Gospel is still despised and rejected. The real Christ of to-day, among men, is unknown and unrecognised as much as he was among his own nation eighteen hundred years ago. Evangelical doctrine is at a discount, holy living is censured, and spiritual-mindedness is derided.

"What," say they, "this evangelical doctrine, call you it the royal truth? Who believes it now-a-days? Science has exploded it. There is nothing great about it; it may afford comfort to old women, and to those who have not capacity enough for free thought, but its reign is over, never to return." As to living in separation from the world, it is called Puritanism, or worse. Christ in doctrine, Christ in spirit, Christ in life—the world cannot endure as king. Few now-a-days will side with the truth their fathers bled for. The day for covenanting to follow

Jesus through evil report and shame appears to have gone by. Yet, though men turn round upon us, and say, "Do you call your Gospel divine? Are you so preposterous as to believe that your religion comes from God and is to subdue the world?"—we boldly answer, "Yes!" Even as beneath the peasant's garb and the wan visage of the Son of Mary we can discern the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father! so beneath the simple form of a despised Gospel we perceive the royal lineaments of truth divine. We care nothing about the outward apparel or the external housing of truth; we love it for its own sake. To us, the marble halls and the alabaster columns are nothing, we see more in the manger and the cross. We are satisfied that Christ is the king still where he was wont to be king, and that is not among the great ones of the earth, nor among the mighty and the learned, but amongst the base things of the world and the things which are not, which shall bring to nought the things that are, for these hath God from the beginning chosen to be his own.

Let us add, that our Lord's claim to be a king shall be acknowledged one day by all mankind. When Christ said to Pilate, according to our version, "Thou sayest that I am a king," he virtually prophesied the future confession of all men. Some, taught by his grace, shall in this life rejoice in him as their altogether lovely King. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus might look into the eyes of many of us, and say, "Thou sayest that I am a king," and we would reply, "We do say it joyfully." But the day shall come when he shall sit upon his great white throne, and then, when the multitudes shall tremble in the presence of his awful majesty, even such as Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and the chief priests, shall own that he is a king! Then to each of his astounded and overwhelmingly convinced enemies he might say, "Now, O despiser, thou sayest that I am a king," for to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord!

Let us remember, here, that when our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a king," he was not referring to his divine dominion. Pilate was not thinking of that at all, nor did our Lord, I think, refer to it: yet, forget not that, as divine, he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must never forget that, though he died in weakness as man, yet he ever lives and

rules as God. Nor do I think he referred to his mediatorial sovereignty, which he possesses over the earth for his people's sake; for the Lord has all power committed unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Father has given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as are given him. Pilate was not alluding to that, nor our Lord either, in the first place; but he was speaking of that rule which he personally exercises over the minds of the faithful, by means of the truth.

You remember Napoleon's saying: "I have founded an empire by force, and it has melted away; Jesus Christ established his kingdom by love, and it stands to this day, and will stand." That is the kingdom to which our Lord's word refers, the kingdom of spiritual truth in which Jesus reigns as Lord over those who are of the truth. He claimed to be a king, and the truth which he revealed, and of which he was the personification, is, therefore, the sceptre of his empire. He rules by the force of truth over those hearts which feel the power of right and truth, and therefore willingly yield themselves to his guidance, believe his word, and are governed by his will. It is as a spiritual Lord that Christ claims sovereignty among men; he is king over minds that love him, trust him, and obey him, because they see in him the truth which their souls pine for. Other kings rule our bodies, but Christ our souls, they govern by force, but he by the attractions of righteousness; theirs is, to a great extent, a fictitious royalty, but his is true, and finds its force in truth.

Now, observe, secondly, that OUR LORD DECLARED THIS KINGDOM TO BE HIS MAIN OBJECT IN LIFE. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." To set up his Kingdom was the reason why he was born of the virgin. To be King of men, it was necessary for him to be born. He was always the Lord of all; he needed not to be born to be a king in that sense, but to be king through the power of truth, it was essential that he should be born in our nature. Why so? I answer, first, because it seems unnatural that a ruler should be alien in nature to the people over whom he rules. An angelic king of men would be unsuitable; there could not exist the sympathy which is the cement of a spiritual empire. Jesus, that he might govern by force of love and truth alone, became of one

nature with mankind ; he was a man among men, a real man—but a right noble and kingly man, and so a King of men.

But, again, the Lord was born that he might be able to save his people. Subjects are essential to a kingdom ; a king cannot be a king if there be none to govern. But all men must have perished through sin, had not Christ come into the world and been born to save. His birth was a necessary step to his redeeming death ; his incarnation was necessary to the atonement.

Moreover, truth never exerts such power as when it is embodied. Truth spoken may be defeated, but truth acted out in the life of a man is omnipotent, through the Spirit of God. Now, Christ did not merely speak the truth, but he *was* truth. Had he been truth embodied in an angelic form, he had possessed small power over our hearts and lives ; but perfect truth in a human form has royal power over renewed humanity. Truth embodied in flesh and blood has power over flesh and blood. Hence, for this purpose was he born. So when ye hear the bells ringing out at Christmas, think of the reason why Jesus was born ; dream not that he came to load your tables and fill your cups ; but in your mirth look higher than all earth-born things. No ; but look within your hearts, and say, for this purpose was he born : that he might be a King, that he might rule through the truth in the souls of people who are by grace made to love the truth of God.

And then he added, "For this cause came I into the world" ; that is, he came out of the bosom of the Father that he might set up his kingdom, by unveiling the mysteries which were hid from the foundation of the world. No man can reveal the counsel of God, but one who has been with God ; and the Son who has come forth of the ivory palaces of gladness, announces to us tidings of great joy ! For this cause also came he into the world, from the obscure retirement of Joseph's workshop, where, for many years, he was hidden like a pearl in its shell. It was needful that he should be made known, and that the truth to which he witnessed should be sounded in the ears of the crowd. Since he was to be a King, he must leave seclusion, and come forth to do battle for his throne ; he must address the multitudes on the hill-side ; he must speak by the sea-shore ; he must gather disciples, and send them forth by two and two to publish on the housetops the secrets of mighty truth !

He came not forth because he loved to be seen of men, or courted popularity; but for this purpose—that, the truth being published, he might set up his kingdom. It was needful that he should come out into the world and teach, or truth would not be known, and consequently could not operate. The sun must come forth, like a bridegroom out of his chamber, or the kingdom of light will never be established; the breath must come forth from the hiding-place of the winds, or life will never reign in the valley of dry bones. During three years, our Lord lived conspicuously, and emphatically “came into the world.” He was seen of men so closely as to be beheld, looked upon, touched, and handled. He was intended to be a pattern, and therefore, it was needful that he should be seen. The life of a man who lives in absolute retirement may be admirable for himself and acceptable with God, but it cannot be exemplary to men: for this cause the Lord came forth into the world, that all he did might influence mankind. His enemies were permitted to watch his every action, and to endeavour to entrap him in his speech, by way of test; his friends saw him in privacy, and knew what he did in solitude; thus his whole life was reported—he was observed on the cold mountain-side at midnight, as well as in the midst of the great congregation. This was permitted to make the truth known, for every action of his life was truth, and tended to set up the kingdom of truth in the world.

Let us pause here. Christ is a king, a king by force of truth in a spiritual kingdom; for this purpose was he born; for this cause came he into the world. My soul, ask thyself this question:—Has this purpose of Christ’s birth and life been answered in thee? If not, what avails Christmas to thee? The choristers will sing, “Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given.” Is that true to thee? How can it be unless Jesus reigns in thee, and is thy Saviour and thy Lord? Those who can in truth rejoice in his birth are those who know him as their bosom’s Lord, ruling their understanding by the truth of his doctrine; their admiration by the truth of his life; their affections by the truth of his person. This question may well come home to us, for there are many who say, “Christ is my King,” who know not what they say, for they do not obey him. He is the servant of Christ who trusts in Christ, who walks according to Christ’s mind, and

loves the truth which Jesus has revealed: all others are mere pretenders.

Our Lord, in the third place, REVEALED THE NATURE OF HIS ROYAL POWER. I have already spoken on that, but I must do so again. We should have thought the text would have run thus: "Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should establish my kingdom." It is not so in words, but so it must mean, for Jesus was not incoherent in his speech. We conclude that the words employed have the same meaning as that which the context suggests, only it is differently expressed. If our Lord had said, "That I might establish a kingdom," he might have misled Pilate; but when he availed himself of the spiritual explanation, and said that his kingdom was truth, and that the establishment of his kingdom was by bearing witness to the truth, then, though Pilate did not understand him—for it was far above his comprehension—yet, at any rate, he was not misled.

Our Lord, in effect, tells us that truth is the pre-eminent characteristic of his kingdom, and that his royal power over men's hearts is through the truth. Now, the witness of our Lord among men was emphatically upon real and vital matters. He dealt not with fiction, but with facts; not with trifles, but with infinite realities. He speaks not of opinions, view, or speculations, but of infallible verities. How many preachers waste time over what may be or may not be! Our Lord's testimony was pre-eminently practical and matter-of-fact, full of verities and certainties. I have sometimes, when hearing sermons, wished the preacher would come to the point, and would deal with something that really concerned our soul's welfare. What concern have dying men with the thousand trivial questions which are flitting around us? We have heaven or hell before us, and death within a stone's-throw; for God's sake do not trifle with us, but tell us the truth at once! Jesus gives sinners who believe in him the truth which they need to know; the assurance of sin forgiven through his blood, favour ensured by his righteousness, and heaven secured by his eternal life.

Moreover, Jesus has power over his people because he testifies not to symbols, but to the very substance of truth. The Scribes and Pharisees were very fluent upon sacrifices, offerings, oblations, tithes, fastings, and the like; but what influence

could all that exert over aching hearts? Jesus has imperial power over contrite spirits, because he tells them of his one real sacrifice and of the perfection which he has secured to all believers. The priests lost their power over the people because they went no further than the shadow, and sooner or later all will do so who rest in the symbol. The Lord Jesus retains his power over his saints because he reveals the substance, for grace and truth are by Jesus Christ. Let us take care lest we also set great store by externals, and miss the essential, spiritual life of our holy faith. Christ's kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!

The power of King Jesus in the hearts of his people lies much in the fact that he brings forth unalloyed truth, without mixture of error. Men taught of his Holy Spirit to love the truth, recognise this fact and surrender their souls to the royal sway of the Lord's truth, and it makes them free, and sanctifies them; nor can anything make them disown such a sovereign, for as the truth lives and abides in their hearts, so Jesus, who is the truth, abides also.

The Lord Jesus taught that worship must be true, spiritual, and of the heart, or else it would be nothing worth. He would not take sides with the temple at Gerizim or that on Zion, but he declared that the time was come when those who worshipped God would worship him in spirit and in truth. Now, regenerate hearts feel the power of this, and rejoice that it emancipates them from the beggarly elements of carnal ritualism. They accept gladly the truth that pious words of prayer or praise are vanity, unless the heart has living worship within it. In the great truth of spiritual worship, believers possess a Magna Charta, dear as life itself.

Our Lord taught, also, that all false living was base and loathsome. He poured contempt on the phylacteries of hypocrites and the broad borders of the garments of oppressors of the poor. With him, ostentatious alms, long prayers, frequent fasts, and the tithe of mint and cummin, were all nothing when practised by those who devoured widows' houses. He cared nothing for white-washed sepulchres and platters with outsides made clean, he judged the thoughts and intents of the heart. What woes were those which he denounced upon the formalists of his day! It must have been a grand sight to have seen the lowly Jesus

roused to indignation, thundering forth peal on peal his denunciations of hypocrisy. Elijah never called fire from heaven one half so grandly. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," is the loudest roll of heaven's artillery!

Besides, our Lord came not only to teach us the truth, but a mysterious power goes forth from him, through that Spirit which rests on him without measure—which subdues chosen hearts to truthfulness, and then guides truthful hearts into fulness of peace and joy. Have you never felt when you have been with Jesus, that a sense of his purity has made you yearn to be purged of all hypocrisy and every false way? Have you not been ashamed of yourself when you have come forth from hearing his word, from watching his life, and, above all, from enjoying his fellowship—quite ashamed that you have not been more real, more sincere, more true, more upright, and so a more loyal subject of the truthful King? I know you have. Nothing about Jesus is false or even dubious; he is transparent—from head to foot he is truth in public, truth in private, truth in word, and truth in deed.

And now, in the fourth place, our Lord DISCLOSED THE METHOD OF HIS CONQUEST. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, *that I should bear witness for the truth.*" Christ never yet set up his kingdom by force of arms. Mohammed drew the sword, and converted men by giving them the choice of death or conversion; but Christ said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." No compulsion ought to be used with any man to lead him to receive any opinion, much less to induce him to espouse the truth. Falsehood requires the rack of the Inquisition, but truth needs not such unworthy aid; her own beauty, and the Spirit of God, are her strength. Moreover, Jesus used no arts of priestcraft, or tricks of superstition. The foolish are persuaded of a dogma, by the fact that it is promulgated by a learned doctor of high degree, but our Rabboni wears no sounding titles of honour. None can say that he reigns over men by the glitter of pomp, or the fascination of sensuous ceremonies. His battle-axe is the truth; truth is both his arrow and his bow, his sword and his buckler.

Here it will be fit to answer the question, "What truth did he witness to?" Ah, my brethren, what truth did he *not* witness to? Did he not mirror all truth in his life? See how clearly he set

forth the truth that God is love. How melodious, how like a peal of Christmas bells, was his witness to the truth that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." He also bore witness that God is just. How solemnly he proclaimed that fact! His flowing wounds, his dying agonies rang out that solemn truth, as with a knell which even the dead might hear. He bore witness to God's demand for truth in the inward parts; for he often dissected men and laid them bare, and opened up their secret thoughts and discovered them to themselves, and made them see that only sincerity could bear the eye of God.

Did he not bear witness to the truth that God had resolved to make for himself a new people and a true people? Was he not always telling of his sheep who heard his voice, of the wheat which would be gathered into the garner, and of the precious things which would be treasured up when the bad would be thrown away? Therein he was bearing witness that the false must die, that the unreal must be consumed, that the lie must rust and rot; but that the true, the sincere, the gracious, the vital, shall stand every test, and outlast the sun. In an age of shams, he was always sweeping away pretences and establishing truth and right by his witness.

And now, this is the way in which Christ's kingdom is to be set up in the world. For this cause was the Church born, and for this end came she into the world, that she might set up Christ's Kingdom by bearing witness to the truth. If you love the Lord, bear witness to the truth. You must do it personally; you must also do it collectively. Never join any church whose creed you do not entirely and unfeignedly believe, for if you do you act a lie, and are, moreover, a partaker in the error of other men's testimonies. I would not for a moment say anything to retard Christian unity, but there is something before unity, and that is, "truth in the inward parts" and honesty before God. I dare not be a member of a church whose teaching I knew to be false in vital points. I would sooner go to heaven alone than belie my conscience for the sake of company.

Let us bear witness to the truth, since there is great need of doing so just now, for witnessing is in ill repute. The age extols no virtue so much as "liberality," and condemns no vice so

fiercely as bigotry, *alias* honesty. If you believe anything and hold it firmly, all the dogs will bark at you. Let them bark: they will have done when they are tired! You are responsible to God and not to mortal men. Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and he has sent you to do the same; take care that you do it, offend or please; for it is only by this process that the kingdom of Christ is to be set up in the world.

Our Saviour, having spoken of his kingdom and the way of establishing it, DESCRIBED HIS SUBJECTS: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." That is to say, wherever the Holy Spirit has made a man a lover of truth, he always recognises Christ's voice and yields himself to it. Where are the people who love the truth? Well, we need not enquire long. We need not Diogenes' lantern to find them, they will come to the light; and where is light but in Jesus? Where are those that would not seem to be what they are not? Where are the men who desire to be true in secret and before the Lord? They may be discovered where Christ's people are discovered; they will be found listening to those who bear witness to the truth. Those who love pure truth, and know what Christ is, will be sure to fall in love with him and hear his voice. Judge ye, then, this day whether ye are of the truth or not; for if you love the truth, you know and obey the voice which calls you away from your old sins, from false refuges, from evil habits, from everything which is not after the Lord's mind. You have heard him in your conscience rebuking you for that of the false which remains in you; encouraging in you that of the true which is struggling there.

Dare we avow ourselves on the side of truth at this hour of its humiliation? Do we own the royalty of Christ's truth when we see it every day dishonoured. If Gospel truth were honoured everywhere, it would be an easy thing to say "I believe it"; but now, in these days, when it has no honour among men, dare we cleave to it at all costs? Are you willing to walk with the truth through the mire and through the slough? Have you the courage to profess unfashionable truth? Are you willing to believe the truth against which science, falsely so-called, has vented her spleen? Are you willing to accept the truth although it is said that only the poor and uneducated will receive it? Are you willing to be the disciple of the Galilean, whose Apostles were fishermen? Verily, verily, I say unto you, in that day in

which the truth in the person of Christ shall come forth in all its glory, it shall go ill with those who were ashamed to own it and its Master.

In the next place, if we have heard Christ's voice, do we recognise our life-object? Do we feel, "For this end were we born, and for this cause came we into the world, that we might bear witness to the truth?" I do not believe that you came into the world to be a linendraper, or an auctioneer, and nothing else. I do not believe that God created you, my sister, to be merely and only a sempstress, a nurse, or a housekeeper. Immortal souls were not created for merely mortal ends. For this purpose was I born, that, with my voice in this place, and everywhere else, I might bear witness to the truth. You acknowledge that : then I beg you, each one, to acknowledge that you have a similar mission. "I could not occupy the pulpit," says one. Never mind that : bear witness for the truth where you are, and in your own sphere.

And now, last of all, do you own Christ's superlative dignity? Do you see what a King, Christ is? Is he such a King to you as none other could be? It was but yesterday a prince entered one of our great towns, and they crowded all their streets to welcome him—yet he was but a mortal man. And then at night they illuminated their city, and made the heavens glow as though the sun had risen before his appointed hour. Yet what had this prince done for them? Loyal subjects were they, and that was the reason of their joy. But O, beloved, we need not ask, "What has Christ done for us?"—we will ask, "What has he not done for us?" Emmanuel, we owe all to thee! Thou art our new creator, our Redeemer from the lowest pit of hell! In thyself resplendent and altogether lovely, thy beauties command our adoration! Thou hast lived for us, thou hast bled for us, thou hast died for us; and thou art preparing a kingdom for us, and thou art coming again to take us to be with thee where thou art! All this commands our love. All hail! all hail! Thou art our King, and we worship thee with all our soul!

If any present in this assembly have never obeyed our King, may they come to trust in him; for he is a tender Saviour, and is willing to receive the biggest and blackest sinner who will come to him. Whosoever trusts in him, will never find him fail; for he will save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

XVI

"THE KING OF THE JEWS"

"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."—John 19: 19.

IT was the usual custom of the Romans, when a man was put to death by crucifixion, to affix to the cross, somewhere where it might be read, an account of his crime. His name and title would be given, and the accusation that had been brought against him, so that all who passed by might read the reason why he had been put to such an ignominious death. Our Saviour, therefore, being numbered with the transgressors, must be treated in all respects as they were. If their accusations were published, so must he have his accusation published among the sons of men. How wondrous was the condescension that he, whom all heaven adored as the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, should be hanged upon a tree, and that he should have his accusation written up over his head just as if he had been a common malefactor.

I wish we could realize both the dignity of his person and the shame to which he was exposed. If we could realize this we should be filled with grief for him, and with thankfulness to him that he condescended to die the death of the cross. I wish it were possible for us now to stand at the foot of the cross with Mary, and John, and the other disciples, and to hear the ribaldry and scorn for a moment, and then to look up, and see that sorrowful face, and that tortured body, and to read, in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It was a very remarkable thing that Pilate should have written, as Matthew and Luke say that he did, "This is the King of the Jews," and we do not at all wonder that the chief priests said to Pilate, "Write not, the King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." But Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Divine providence always has its way. It matters not who may be the persons concerned, God knows how to work his own will with them. It was his purpose that his Son should not die upon the cross without a public proclamation of his innocence, and an official recognition that he was what he had said he was, namely, the King of the Jews. Who was to put up such a notice over his head as he hung there? Peter might have been bold enough to attempt to do it; but he would certainly not have succeeded, for the Roman legionaries jealously guarded every place of execution. Even John, daring as he might have been in such a crisis, could not have achieved the task. It was best that it should be done by authority, done by the Roman governor, done with an official pen, and so secured that no envious chief priest dared to pluck it down, and no hand of a scoffer could be uplifted to blot out its testimony. It was privileged writing because it was written by the pen of a Roman official, and there it must stay, under the authority of the Roman law, as long as the body of Jesus hung upon the cross. See what God can do. He can make the vacillating Pilate to become stubborn, and he can make him resolve to do what one would have thought would have been the last thing he would have done. Though his motive probably was to ridicule the Saviour, yet the thing was done as God would have it, and Jesus on the cross hung there proclaimed by Roman authority as "the King of the Jews."

It may appear to you, at first sight, that there is not much importance in this fact, but I think I shall be able to show you that there is if you will sit down now, at the foot of the cross, and look up to your crucified Lord, and read this writing again.

First, read Pilate's proclamation IN REFERENCE TO MAN.

This is a *picture of how the world rejects the Saviour*. The Saviour had truly come into the world. That he might be known to be a Saviour, he had taken the name of Jesus, that is, Saviour. That he might be known as one who was very humble and lowly, he had condescended to dwell among men of the very humblest kind, and, therefore, he had chosen to dwell at Nazareth, and to be called the Nazarene. Thus he was known as Jesus, the Saviour, and as Jesus of Nazareth, an approachable and lowly Saviour. Jesus had come into the world to save men, and he had commenced his mission by saving many from

diseases which had been regarded as incurable. He had opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, given speech to the dumb, cleansing to lepers, and he had even raised the dead to life. There were many also whom he had healed of spiritual infirmities, for he had given faith to the faithless, and holiness and excellence of character to those who, until then, had lived in sin.

He was indeed Jesus the Saviour, but how did men receive him? Did they come and fall at his feet, and kiss the very dust he trod upon? One might not have been surprised if they had done so, but they did not. Did they gather around him with joyful clamour, all sick ones eager to touch the hem of his garment that they might be made whole? There were a few who did so, "a remnant according to the election of grace" who received him, and to them "he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." But it was not so with the mass of mankind; discerning in him something strange and singular, seeing in him no enmity, no sinful anger, no pride, no bitterness, seeing in him only superlative love, yet they must needs treat him most foully, for his life was spent in poverty and reproach, and at last he was condemned to die on the accursed tree. The world hung him up upon the felon's gibbet, and in doing so, men said, "This is the Saviour, the Nazarene, and this is how we treat him. We do not want to be saved from sin, for we love it. We do not want to be saved from rebellion, and to be brought into peace with God through Jesus Christ, so this is what we do with God's Ambassador. This is how we serve him who comes with words of reconciliation and grace upon his lips; we hang him up to die, for we do not want him." This is only a specimen of what all sinful hearts do; till they are changed by grace, they will not have the Saviour to rule over them.

"Oh!" says someone, "you bring too harsh a charge against me!" Is it so? Have you received Jesus? Do you believe in him? Has he become your Saviour? If not, why not? Can you give any justifiable reason for your unbelief and rejection of him? It seems to me, and I leave your conscience to decide whether it is so, that, by remaining in unbelief, you do practically say, "I prefer to be damned for ever rather than believe in Jesus Christ. At any rate, that is your choice at this present

moment; and if a man will show his objection to Christ to so great an extent that he would himself be cast into hell sooner than let Jesus save him, you may depend upon it that there dwells in his heart sufficient enmity to Christ to hang him up again upon the gibbet if he were here once more. Christ would be hanged to-morrow if he came here among unregenerate hearts; aye, by people that hang their crosses about their necks, and fix them on their walls. They would cry, as their predecessors did of old, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." To this day, when substitution is preached, and the blood of atonement, and salvation by simple faith in Jesus, and not by "sacraments" and priests and good works, men foam at the mouth with rage, for they still hate the Christ, the only Saviour of the sons of men.

Next, I see here that *man slays the incarnate God*: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." Whether Pilate intended to indicate that he was the Messiah, at any rate the Jews saw that this would be the meaning attached to his inscription over Christ's head; it would be said that their Messiah was crucified, consequently they desired that the writing might be altered, but Pilate would not alter it. Now, the Messiah of the Jews was none other than God in human flesh. Did not Isaiah speak of him as Immanuel, God with us? He was that promised "Seed of the woman" who was to bruise the old serpent's head. This was he of whom David said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He was David's Son, yet he was also David's Lord, and there he is: he has come among men, and as God he came to tabernacle in human flesh, and dwelt among men. It is a wonderful story that tells us how he was found as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, where the shepherds came to adore him, and how he grew up among men as a man like other men, working at the carpenter's bench in the shop of his reputed father, yet all the while he was God veiled beneath the humble form of the Son of Mary.

Even when the time came for his manifestation unto Israel, he was still veiled, though his Godhead every now and then flashed through the veil of his humanity. He bade the sea be still when its wild uproar threatened to engulf the vessel in which he and his disciples were. He worked such wonders that it was clear that all things obeyed him. The fish came in swarms

from the deep to the net which he had bidden his disciples cast into the sea, and the loaves and fishes were multiplied in his hands and theirs, through his miraculous power. Men could not help seeing that he was more than man, and that he was indeed the Son of God, as he claimed to be.

Yet the husbandmen, to whom he was sent by his Father, to ask for the rent of the vineyard that had been let to them, said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." In other words, they said, "This is the God-man; let us do with him what we would do with God if we could"; so they hanged him up like a felon, and put a label above his head as much as to say to God himself, "This is what we have done to One who was more like thee than any man we have ever heard of before, and One who says that he and thou are one."

O sirs, this wicked world never went so far in wickedness as it displayed on that occasion. The essence of every sin is enmity against God; and when any sin is analysed, it is always found that its essence is this, "No God." Sin is a stab at the heart of God. Every time we sin, we practically say, "We do not want God's government; we do not want God's laws; we do not want God."

I once heard an eloquent divine, who had been accusing men of great sin, finish his indictment by using this remarkable expression, "this deicidal world." There he reached the climax of truth, for this is a deicidal world. It cannot actually put God to death, but it would do so if it could; and in putting Christ to death it showed the enmity towards God that was really in its heart. The world would not put its own god to death, the god that men imagine, the god that their own intellects fabricate, the god like themselves: but as for the God of the Bible, there are millions of men who would be glad to put that God out of his own universe if they could.

Thirdly, I see here that *man's chief objection to Christ is his authority*; for the pith of that inscription was, "Jesus the King." Pilate did not write, "This is Jesus the Teacher," or many might have said, "Let him teach what he pleases, it is no concern of ours. We do not care what the seers see, or what they say." Pilate did not put up, "This is Jesus the Priest." Many would be quite content to let him be the great High Priest if they also might be priests. But Pilate wrote, "This is Jesus the

King," and that is the target at which they shoot all their arrows. You remember that the writer of the second Psalm says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The resolve of human nature until it is renewed is always this, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Men might be willing for Christ to save them, but not for him to reign over them. Such laws as these,—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” “Thou shalt forgive till seventy times seven,” the law of love, the law of gentleness, the law of kindness—man says that he admires them, but when these laws come home to him, and lay hold of the reins of his ambition, cramp his covetousness, and condemn his selfrighteousness, straightway he is offended; and when Christ says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”; when he begins to teach the necessity of absolute purity, and to say that even a lascivious glance of the eye is a sin, then men reply, “His rule will never do for us,” and they hang him up to die because they will not submit to his authority.

Once more, we learn from this narrative that *man ridicules Christ's kingdom*. Pilate did not hate Christ; he probably did not think enough of him to expend any of his hatred upon him. I have no doubt that he thought that Jesus was a poor enthusiast, who had been living alone so long that he had addled his brains. He was well meaning, and perhaps clever; but, at the same time, not the sort of man for a Roman governor to dispute with. He was very sorry to have to put him to death, for there were so many good points about the poor creature that he did not wish to let his enemies destroy him. When the question of Christ's kingdom came up, I can imagine how scoffingly Pilate asked him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” How contemptuously he must have looked down upon such a poor emaciated creature, who seemed to be despised by everybody, as Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world”; and Pilate asked, “Art thou a king then?” half laughing as he spoke. He must have felt as if he could fairly laugh him to scorn, and I have no doubt that it was in that spirit that he wrote, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews,” doing it in a vein of grim sardonic humour, first, towards the Jews, and secondly, towards Christ himself, as

much as to say, "This is the great King that the Jews have been looking for. They are going to fight Cæsar, and get free, and this is the ringleader who is to help them to defeat all the legions of haughty Rome."

Amongst the ungodly, at the present day, the idea of a spiritual kingdom is quite beyond their comprehension; they cannot make out what it is. The relation between Church and State will not be settled by the statesmen of any political party. There is a very singular relation between the two, though they are as dissimilar as materialism is from spirit. The realms of the two often overlap one another; you cannot draw a line, and say, "So far is the State, and so far is the Church." The fact is, the true Church of God is never subordinate to the State; it moves in another sphere altogether, and rules after another fashion. A spiritual kingdom, according to some people, means certain laws and regulations that are drawn up by bishops and synods and councils, but that kind of kingdom is no more spiritual than an Act passed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is not a thing that you can see with your eyes or understand after the manner of men. "Ye must be born again" in order to get into it, or even to see it. It is too ethereal to be checked by human legislation. It is a mighty power which Christ has set up in this world, a power mightier than all secular states combined, a kingdom like the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which will break in pieces every other power, and fill the whole earth in God's appointed time. Oh, that we saw its power more manifest, nowadays, in the hearts of men, the power of that kingdom of which Christ is the King, and this blessed Book is the law, and the Holy Spirit is the great executive, and each of us is a servant in the courts of the great King living and acting according to his will.

The King is coming, a second time, in all the splendour of his glory, and he will let the world know that, although his kingdom is not like others, and is not to be kept up by gold, and pomp, and rank, and dignity, and physical force, yet it is a kingdom which shall last when earthly princes and thrones shall all have passed away, and everyone who belongs to that kingdom shall possess a crown and a glory before which all the pomp of this world shall pale for ever.

Now, secondly, I have to ask your attention to the subject in quite another way, IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST. What did that inscription over his head mean?

It meant, first, that *Christ's honour was clear*. Look at the inscription over the head of that thief who is hanging on the next cross. "Put to death for robbery in the mountains, where he was taken red-handed, having stabbed one of the guards who attempted to arrest him." You quite understand that inscription, and you pass on to Jesus, and you want to know about the crime of which he has been guilty; you will be quite sure that they will put over his head an account of the worst thing he has ever done. There are the chief priests and scribes, and a multitude of the Jews watching to see what is written, and there is Pilate wanting to excuse his own conscience. If he can write anything that will exonerate him from the guilt of putting Christ to death, he will be sure to write it; so he takes his pen in his hand, and he writes, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "Well," you say, "is that all that can be brought against him, that he is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"? Yes, that is his only offence; they cannot sum up his guilt in any other words. His crime is that he is what he is, that he was a Saviour, that he dwelt at Nazareth, and that he was the King of the Jews.

Now, no exoneration of his character could be better than that of this official accusation against him; and if this accusation brings nothing against him, think how much may be said in his favour by his friends. When a man is brought before the judge, his accuser is quite sure to say all he can against him: and when Christ was about to be put to death, those who were responsible for that colossal crime had to make out as grave a charge against him as they could. But this was all they could do; they could not bring anything else against him except that he was Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. See, then, how absolutely without blemish and without spot was the Lamb of our passover. See how he "knew no sin," though he was made a sin-offering for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Exult, Christians, in this public and official testimony to the spotless purity of his whole life and character.

Next, as far as Christ is concerned, we may view this inscription as *the explanation of his death* as well as the clearing of his

character. Keep that superscription clearly in your mind's eye, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." That is the reason why he died. Jesus died, first, because he was Jesus, because he was the Saviour. That is the meaning of it ; not that he might be made an example merely, not that he might bear witness to the truth only : but that cruel death means atonement, and salvation by atonement. Let us all look up to him upon the cross. If we have done so before, let us look up to him again, and say, "Yes, blessed Lord, we see that thou didst die, and that thou didst die to save us ; and we magnify thee because this was the cause of thy death, that thou wast the Saviour." The whole title that Pilate wrote signified that Christ was the Messiah, and he died because he was the Messiah. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." This was the wonderful language of the prophet Daniel, "cut off, but not for himself" ; cut off because he was the Sent One of God, the Anointed of the Most High. The prophet Zechariah had also recorded the words of Jehovah, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." There you have the whole reason for Christ's death condensed into a sentence. Jesus dies because he is the Saviour, the anointed and prophesied Messiah, sent of God to be the King of the Jews and of the Gentiles too.

But, thirdly, as far as Christ was concerned, this inscription over his head was a *claim which was there and then announced*. He is hanging on the cross, and there is no trumpeter to make a proclamation of his kingship, but he does not need any such herald, for the same soldiers who fasten his hands to the wood fasten up an inscription which is the best proclamation possible, for it is in three different languages that all mankind may read it, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." He claims to be King, so stand at the foot of the cross, I pray you, and admit his claim. If you would have Jesus to be your Saviour, you must have him as your King ; you must submit to his government, for he claims the right to rule over all who acknowledge him to be Jesus ; yea, more than that, he claims to rule all mankind, for all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and we are bidden to proclaim his kingdom throughout the whole world, and to say to all men, "Jesus of Nazareth is your King, bow down before him. Ye kings, bow before him, for he is King of kings ; ye lords

and nobles, bow before him, for he is Lord of lords; and all ye sons and daughters of men, bow at his feet, for he must reign; and even if you are his enemies, he must reign over you; in spite of all your enmity and opposition, you must be brought to lie at his feet. The claims of Christ, therefore, were published even from the tree on which he died; so do not resist them, but willingly yield yourselves up to Jesus now, and let him be King to you henceforth and for ever.

And, then, not only was a claim of his sovereignty made by the affixing of this title, but *his reign was there and then proclaimed*. In an earthly monarchy, as soon as one king is gone, it is usual to proclaim his successor; and by that accusation written up over the head of Christ a proclamation was made throughout all the earth that Jesus had assumed the throne, and he has never ceased to reign. He went back to his Father, and returned again to the earth, and dwelt here for forty days, and then his feet left mount Olivet, and he ascended to his throne, and there he sits "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." His kingdom is established; do you all belong to it? It is a kingdom that, in a certain sense, was recognised on the cross by Pilate's proclamation, though it had existed long before, for his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Do you belong to it, or are you outside of it, opposed to it, or indifferent to it? Remember that he that is not with Christ is against him. Those who are not on his side he reckons to be on the other side. Are you in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, I know that you look with delight upon that inscription, and as you trust to the blood of Christ to cleanse you, you cast your eye up to that dear head that was crowned with thorns, and rejoice to think that Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is also your King and Lord and Saviour.

I want to make just this other remark about this inscription. Inasmuch as Pilate would not alter it, it seems to me that *God set forth to mankind that he would never have it altered*. Pilate could have sent for that inscription, and, with a few strokes of his pen, could have inserted the words that the chief priests wanted, "*He said, I am King of the Jews.*" But Pilate would not do it, and the high priest could not do it, and the devil could not do it, and all the devils in hell, and all the wicked men upon earth, with all their rage, cannot do it now. God has said it as well as Pilate,

"What I have written I have written." "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." He must reign, and no power can ever take away his kingdom from him! His Church still prays, "Thy kingdom come," and that kingdom is yet to come in all its fulness when the whole of Israel shall be gathered together, and shall accept him as their Lord and King. Yea, more than that, for "he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him."

This is the conclusion of the whole matter, *let us cheerfully accept him as our King*. Have we done so? Then, let us try to push his conquests on yet further, and seek to extend the boundaries of his kingdom. Are you doing this? Then, do it yet more earnestly; and do it with the right instrument, for the great weapon of conquest is the cross. It was on the cross that the proclamation was first lifted up, and it is by the cross that it must be carried to the ends of the earth; not by human learning or eloquence, not by bribery, or the help of the State, and I know not what besides, but by the setting forth of Christ evidently crucified among the sons of men. The cross is its own battle-axe, and weapon of war. "In this sign shalt thou conquer." Let the whole Church preach Christ more, and live Christ more, and then the proclamation of his kingdom, which was first fastened up on that cross, shall be emblazoned throughout the whole world, and the power of his kingdom shall be felt to the very ends of the earth.

I looked into the darkness, and I thought I saw a cross before me, and I saw him who did once hang upon it; but, as I looked at it, that cross seemed to grow. It seemed to become a tree, and I saw it strike its roots down deep, until the lowest depths of human misery had been touched and blessed by them. Then I saw that tree tower on high, piercing the clouds, passing through the very firmament up above the stars, lifting believers up upon it, and bearing them to the very throne of God by its majestic power. Then I saw that tree stretch forth its mighty branches on every side. Their shadow fell across this highly-favoured land of ours; and also fell across the lands on the other side of the sea. As I watched, the blessed branches stretched out to

Europe, to Asia, to Africa, to America, and to Australasia also. I watched it grow till it became so vast a tree that its shadow seemed to cover the whole earth, and I blessed and adored the God of heaven that he had instituted so mighty a power for the blessing of the sons of men. O Jesus, once crucified but now exalted, so let it be; and let us be thy humble instruments in promoting the extension of thy blessed reign.

XVII

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

“He is the head of the body, the church.”—Colossians 1 : 18.

AS if to show us that this title of “Head of the church” is to be held in highest esteem, it is here placed in connection with the loftiest honours of our Lord Jesus. In the same breath the Son of God is styled “the image of the invisible God,” “the first-born of every creature,” the Creator of all existence, and then “the head of the body, the Church.” We dare not, therefore, think slightly of this title, nor do we hesitate to assert that any levity with regard to it would be as disgraceful as the profane use of any other name of our divine Lord.

What is the Church? The word signifies an assembly. The Church of Jesus Christ is an assembly of faithful men, the whole company of God’s chosen, and called-out ones, the entire community of true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever true believers are, there is a part of the Church; wherever such men are not, whatever organisation may be in existence, there is no church of Jesus Christ. The Church is no corporation of priests, or confederacy of unconverted men, it is the assembly of those whose names are written in heaven. Any assembly of faithful men is *a* church. The aggregate of all these assemblies of faithful men make up *the* one Church which Jesus Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood, and of which he is the sole and only Head. Part of that Church is in heaven, triumphant, part on earth, militant, but these differences of place make no division as to real unity; there is but one Church above, beneath. Time creates no separation, the Church is always one—one Church of the Apostles, one Church of the Reformers, one Church of the first century, one Church of the latter days, and of this one only Church Jesus Christ is the one only Head.

WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR LORD’S HEADSHIP OF THE CHURCH?

We understand this headship to be *the representation of the Church* as a body. We speak of counting heads, meaning thereby persons; the head represents the whole body. God has been pleased to deal with mankind as a community, and his great covenant transactions have been with men in a body, and not with separate individuals. That is to say, at the first creation God did not so much deal with each particular person of the human race, as with the whole race represented in one man, namely, the first Adam. It was so ordained that the race should be bound up in his loins, to stand if he stood, to fall if he fell. Hence, my brethren, the fall, hence original sin, hence the sorrows of this life. In order to salvation, which, perhaps, was only possible because we did not fall singly (for the devils falling singly and separately are reserved without hope of mercy unto everlasting fire), God instituted a second federation, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Apostle calls him the second Adam. He is the Head of that company of mankind who are his chosen, his redeemed, who are known in this world by being led to believe in him, and are ultimately gathered into his rest. Now, Jesus Christ stands to his Church in the same position as Adam stood to his posterity. They are chosen in him, accepted in him, and preserved in him: "Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." As his own words declare it, "Because I live, ye shall live also." In the following chapters of the epistle before us, the Apostle shows that the saints are buried with Jesus, risen with him, and quickened with him. Even more explicit is he in the fifth of the Romans, where the headship of Adam and of Jesus are compared and contrasted.

Our Lord is Head in a *mystical sense*, explained in Colossians 2:19: "The Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." The head is to the body indispensable to life; it is the seat of mental life, the temple of the soul; even so Jesus Christ is the vitalising Head of all his people. "He is our life." "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life of every member of the mystical body depends upon the life of the mystical Head. Through Jesus Christ every living child of God derives his spiritual life. Not one true member of the Church lives by a life of his own. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Separation from Christ is

spiritual death, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." The head mystically is not merely the source of life and the seat of sensation, but it is the throne of supreme government. It is from the brain that the mandate is issued which uplifts the hand or bids it fall by the side. Man walks or speaks, or sleeps, or rises from his couch, according to the dictate of that mysterious royal something which finds a place for itself within the head. Thus in the true Church of God Jesus Christ is the great directing Head; from him the only binding commands go forth; to him all the really spiritual yield a cheerful homage. His members delight to do the will of their Head. The whole fabric of the Church actuated by his life, being filled with his Spirit, most readily concedes to him that in all things he shall have the pre-eminence.

In proportion as Christians are truly united to Jesus they are perfectly governed by him, and it is only because of the old nature which abideth in separation from Christ that believers offend and transgress. In so far as they are spiritual men, so far doth Jesus rule them as the head governeth all the members of the body. The head is also the glory of the body. There the chief beauty of manhood dwells. The divine image is best seen in the countenance; the face is the distinguishing glory of man. Man holds his head erect; his countenance is not turned towards the earth like the beast, it glows with intelligence, it is the index of an immortal mind. Beauty chooses as her favoured seat the features of the countenance; majesty and tenderness, wisdom and love, courage and compassion, here hang out their ensigns; all the graces choose the head as their favoured dwelling-place. In this sense right well is our Lord saluted as the "Head." He is fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into his lips. In Jesus Christ all the beauty of the Church is summed up. What were all his Church without him? A carcase, a ghastly corpse, bereft of all its glory, because divided from its head. What were all the good, and great, and excellent men who have ever lived without Christ? So many ciphers upon a writing table—they count for nothing until their Lord, as the great unit, is put before them to give them power and value; then indeed they swell to a mighty sum, but without him they are less than nothing and vanity.

Another figure which is used to describe the headship of

Christ to the Church is *the conjugal*. As the Lord made Eve out of the flesh of Adam, so hath he taken the Church out of the side of Christ Jesus, and she is of him as Eve was of Adam—she is of his flesh and of his bones. A mysterious union has been established between Christ and his Church, which is constantly compared to that of marriage: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body.” Jesus is the bridegroom; his Church is his bride. They are espoused on to another; in bonds of love they are bound for ever to each other; and they are alike with sacred expectation waiting for the marriage-day, when shall be accomplished the eternal purpose of God and the desire of the Redeemer. As the husband exercises a headship in the house, not at all (when the relationship is rightly carried out) tyrannical or magisterial, but a government founded upon the rule of nature and endorsed by the consent of love, even so Jesus Christ ruleth in his Church, not as a despotic lord, compelling and constraining his subject bride against her will, but as a husband well beloved, obtaining obedience voluntarily from the heart of the beloved one, being in all things so admired and had in esteem as to win an undisputed pre-eminence.

Such conjugal headship is illustrated by the word of God in the old prophecy, “Thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali.” Baali and Ishi both mean lord, but the sense differs; the one is a mere ruler, the other a beloved husband. Jesus Christ’s kingdom is no tyranny; his sceptre is not made of iron; he rules not with blows and curses, and threats, but his sceptre is of silver and his rule is love. The only chains he uses are the chains of his constraining grace; his dominion is spiritual, and extends over willing hearts who delight to bow before him and to give him the honour due unto his name.

Christ is the Head of his church as *King in Zion*. In the midst of the Church of God the supreme government is vested in the person of Christ. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” The Church is the kingdom of God among men. It is purely spiritual, comprehending only spiritual men, and existing only for spiritual objects. And who is its King? None but Jesus. We can truly say, as they did of old, who proclaimed the kingship of the Crucified, “We have another King, one Jesus.” To him the assemblies of the saints pay all regal honour, and at

his throne the entire Church boweth itself, saluting him as Master and Lord. To no other do we render spiritual obeisance. Christ only and solely is King upon Zion's hill, set there by eternal decree, maintained in that position by infinite power, and appointed to remain upon the throne till every enemy shall be made his footstool. I wish I had eloquence that I might bear worthy witness to the crown-rights of King Jesus in his Church, for I know no subject which it is more necessary to insist upon in these eventful times. Let us not be slow with unshaken courage to declare yet again that kings and princes and parliaments have no lawful jurisdiction over the church of Jesus Christ, that it beseems not the best of rulers to claim prerogatives which God has given to his only begotten Son.

We shall, in the second place, come to look a little into this headship of Jesus Christ in a regal sense, as to WHAT IT IMPLIES.

Since Christ is the Head of his body, the Church, he alone can determine doctrines for her. Nothing is to be received as divinely warranted except it cometh with his stamp upon it. It is nothing to the faithful servant of Jesus Christ that a certain dogma comes down to him with the grey antiquity of the ages to make it venerable. Like a sensible man, the Christian respects antiquity, but like a loyal subject of his King, he does not so bow before antiquity as to let it become ruler in Zion instead of the living Christ. A multitude of good men may meet together, and they may, in their judgment, propound a dogma, and assert it to be essential and undoubted, and they may even threaten perils most abundant to those who receive not their verdict; but if the dogma was not authorised long before they decided it—if it was not written in the Book, the decision of the learned council amounts to nothing. All the fathers, and doctors, and divines, and confessors, put together, cannot add a word to the faith once delivered unto the saints: yea, I venture to say, that the unanimous assent of all the saints in heaven and earth would not suffice to make a single doctrine binding upon conscience unless Jesus had so determined. In vain do men say, "So did the early Church"—the early Church has no supremacy over us. It is to no purpose to quote Origen or Augustine: quote the inspired Apostles, and the doctrine is established, but not otherwise. In the Church of God it is never sufficient to say, "So thinks Martin Luther." Who was Martin Luther? A servant of

Jesus Christ, and nothing more. It is not sufficient to say, "So teacheth John Calvin," for who is John Calvin? Hath he shed his blood for you, or is he your master? His opinion is to be respected as the opinion of your fellow servant, but in no respect as a doctor or authoritative teacher in the Church—for Christ alone is Rabbi, and we are to call no man Master upon earth.

Suppose I have received a truth from the very man who was the means of my conversion; I am bound, in candour and affection, to give all respect to him because of the relationship which exists between us, but I must take heed lest this decline into idolatry, and I myself become nothing more than a receiver of truth as the word of man, instead of accepting it as the word of God. I am, therefore, in the most candid manner, but none the less solicitously, to bring to the test every truth which I have received, whether from my father or mother, or my minister, or from some great man of olden times, whose name I have learned to respect; seeking all the while light from above to direct me aright. Nothing is doctrine to the Church of God—nothing which has not been taught in the Scriptures.

So next, since he is the Head, he only can legislate as to the Church. In a state, if any knot of persons should profess to make laws for the kingdom, they would be laughed at; and if they should for a moment attempt to enforce their own rules and regulations in defiance of the laws of the country, they would be amenable to punishment. Now the Church of God hath no power whatever to make laws for herself, since she is not her own head; and no one has any right to make laws for her, for no one is her head but Christ. Christ alone is the law-maker of the Church, and no rule or regulation in the Christian Church standeth for anything unless in its spirit at least it hath the mind of Christ to support and back it up. Such-and-such a thing has been thought to be right in the Church, and therefore it has been laid down, and made prescriptive; the tradition of the fathers has established a certain custom. What then? Why this—that if we can distinctly see that the custom and prescription are not according to the tenor of holy Scripture, and the Spirit of Christ, neither of them are anything to us. But what if the custom be supported by all the good men of every age? I say that matters nought if the Lord hath not taught it. Our conscience is not to be bound. If a law were backed up by fifty

thousand times as many as all the saints, it would have no authority upon the conscience even of the weakest Christian if not laid down by our King himself. When we meet together in church-meeting we cannot make laws for the Lord's kingdom; we dare not attempt it. Such necessary regulations as may be made for carrying out our Lord's commands, to meet for worship, and to proclaim the Gospel, are commendable, because they are acts needful to obedience to his highest laws; but even these minor details are not tolerable if they clearly violate the spirit and mind of Jesus Christ.

But I go further, and venture to say that Christ is not only the legislator of the Church, and has left to us his Statute-book, sufficient to guide us in every dilemma, but he is also the living administrator in the Church. He is not here, it is true, but as monarchs often administrate through lieutenants, so the Lord Jesus administereth through his ever living Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of his people. You are not to think of Christ as of one who is dead and buried. If he were here on earth I suppose nobody would claim to be the head of the Church but himself. His presence would at once overawe every pretender; and now, though he is not here in person, yet he is not dead. He liveth, he sitteth on the throne prepared for him at the right hand of the Father. In spirit he is here. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And what must the true Head of the Church think when he sees another put up into his throne, and impiously called by his title? What must the living Head moving in the midst of the Church feel in regard to such a blasphemous intrusion as that? He, the Holy Ghost, is the Vicegerent of Christ, the representative of the absent Son of Man. But how does this Spirit administrate the laws of God? I answer, through his people, for the Holy Ghost dwells in true believers; and when they meet together as the Lord's servants, and ask his guidance humbly, they may expect to have it—and opening the Statute-book and seeing plain directions as to their course of action, they may be quite sure that what they do has their Master's sanction. If they look first of all for the direction in their Lord's Law-book, and next seek to be instructed as to its meaning by the Holy Spirit, though they be many minds, they shall be led as one man to choose that course of action which shall be after the mind of Christ. Acting humbly and obediently, not on their own

authority, but in the authority of Jesus Christ, who by his Spirit still rules in his church, believers practically show Christ still to be the only Head of his Church as to actual administration as well as to legislation.

The sole authority of Jesus Christ in all respects must be maintained rigorously, but churches are very apt to be guided by something else. Some would have us guided by results. We have heard a discussion upon the question whether or no we should continue missionary operations, since there are so few converted! How can the question ever be raised while the Master's orders run thus—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? Spoken by the mouth of Jesus our ruler, that command stands good, and the results of missions can have no effect upon loyal minds either one way or the other as to their prosecution. If from this day for the next ten thousand years not a single soul should be converted to God by foreign missions, if there still remained a Church of Christ, it would be her duty with increasing vigour to thrust her sons forward into the mission field; because her duty is not measured by the result, but by the imperial authority of Christ. Equally so, the church is not to be regulated by the times.

We are told by some that this age requires a different kind of preaching from that of a hundred years ago; and that two hundred years ago, in the Puritanic times, doctrines were suitable which are exploded now; the minister must keep abreast of the age; this is a thoughtful and philosophic period, and the preacher must therefore philosophise, and bring forth his own thinking rather than "mere declamation," which is the learned name for a plain declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, sirs, it is not so; our King is the same, and the doctrines he has given us have not been changed by his authority, nor the rules he has laid down reversed by his proclamation; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; let the times be polished or uncouth, let them become philosophical or sink into barbarism, our duty will be still the same, in solemn loyalty to Jesus Christ, to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

But the discoveries of science, we are told, have materially affected belief, and therefore we should change our ways according as philosophy changes. No, it must not so be. This

is a stumbling stone and a rock of offence against which he who stumbleth shall be broken. We have the same King still, the same laws still, the same teaching of the word still, and we are to deliver this teaching after the same sort and in the same spirit. *Semper idem* must be our motto—always the same, always keeping close to Jesus Christ and glorifying him, for he and not the times, not the philosophy and not the wit of man, must rule and govern the Church of God. If we shall do this, if any Church shall do this, namely, take its truth from Jesus' lips, live according to Jesus' word, and go forward in his name, such a Church cannot by any possibility fail, for the failure of such a Church would be the failure of the Master's own authority.

He has told us if we keep his commandments, we shall abide in his love. He will be with us always, even to the end of the world, and he has given to his Church his Holy Spirit according to the fulness of those words which he uttered when he breathed on his Apostles, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"; so that a Church acting for Christ, with his authority denouncing the judgments of God upon sin, shall find those judgments follow; and opening the treasure-house of God's mercy to those who seek Jesus Christ by faith, those treasures shall be freely given according to the Church's declaration, which she made in her Master's name. Go in her own name, and she faileth; go in her Lord's name, and she succeedeth. Take with her his sign manual, walk in obedience to his Statute-book, and deliver herself from the lordship of men, and the Church's history shall be written in some such lines as these, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Thirdly, ON WHAT DOES THIS HEADSHIP REST?

Very briefly, it rests on the natural supremacy of Christ's nature. Who could be head but Jesus? For he is perfect man, which we are not. He is the first-born among many brethren, and we are but the younger and weaker. He is God over all, blessed for ever and ever. Surely, none but he should be king in Zion, since there is no part of the Church which is divine except its glorious Head. The headship of Christ is the inevitable and necessary result of his work. He has washed us in his blood—he must be Head. He has loved us from before the foundation of the world, he must be chief. His right hand and

his holy arm hath gotten him the victory—let him be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. That wine-press wherein he trod his enemies alone, till his garments were dyed with blood, was the guarantee to him that he should sit on his Father's throne and reign for ever and ever.

Moreover, the decree of God has decided this beyond dispute. Read the second Psalm, and learn that when the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, the Lord sitting in the heavens laughed at their conspiracy, and scorned the gathering of his foes, "Yet," saith he, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." How gloriously the promise reads: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." It is part of the eternal purpose which constituted the Church that Christ should be made its Head; and if there be a Church of the living God, it is also inevitable that of that Church Christ should be the sole Head.

Moreover, brethren, and but once more, is not our Lord the Head of the Church by universal acclamation and consent of all the members of that Church? We have never set up a rival candidate; no heart renewed by his grace can desire any other king. Rivals in his blood-bought dominion? Rivals against the Son of David! Let them be swept away as the smoke; let them be as driven stubble to his bow! King Jesus! All hail! Long live the King! Bring forth the royal diadem! See you not how the angels crown him? Hark ye not to the songs of cherubim and seraphim, "For thou art worthy, thou art worthy to take the book, and loose the seven seals thereof"? Hear ye not the everlasting chant of those who have overcome through his blood, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood"? while the Church on earth joins in the selfsame solemn canticle, "Crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all, for worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

What then, brethren, WHAT THEN DOES THIS CONDEMN?

What does it condemn? It condemns the pretence of a

Papal headship. Forsooth, a priest at Rome is the head of the Church of Jesus Christ! Well, if the Pope be head of the Church—if he be so—then see what, according to Scripture, he is. This Pio Nono is this—he is the head of the body, the Church “*who is the beginning*.” There was nothing, then, before this aforesaid Pius IX.? “*The first-born from the dead!*” does he claim to have risen from the dead? “*That in all things he might have the pre-eminence*”; is this also the Italian’s right? “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”; blasphemy dares not apply this to the tottering prince whose exchequer needs replenishing with Peter’s pence. Yet this is the description of the person who is the Head of the Church, and, if Pius IX. be not all that, he is no head of the Church.

Nay, but he is the delegated head. What for? Why should Christ delegate authority which he can wield himself? But we need a delegation, for Christ is absent. But the Holy Spirit is that delegation, and is here. Of all the dreams that ever deluded men, and probably of all blasphemies that ever were uttered, there has never been one which is more absurd and which is more fruitful in all manner of mischief than the idea that the Bishop of Rome can be the head of the church of Jesus Christ. No; popes die, and are not; and how could the Church live if its head were dead? The true Head ever liveth, and the Church ever liveth in him.

But it is affirmed that there must needs be a visible headship, and we are told that we must choose in church matters between the headship of the monarch of England and the headship of the pope at Rome. We have no such choice, for when we are asked which we will have to rule us in spiritual things, we say, “Neither—neither for a single moment.” We will no more brook spiritual domination from an English premier than from a Romish pope; we are equally opposed to both—all human headship must go down. To our well beloved queen all honour and reverence as to one of the best of rulers in civil affairs, but in spiritual affairs in the Church of Christ she has no ruling power; what she may have *in the Church of England* is another question. The Church hath no lawful governor or supreme Lord but Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord, as it seems to me, puts this so plainly in the word, that I marvel men who believe in the Bible should think the State could be at the head

of the Church. Leave the Lord to rule in the kingdom of mind and spirit, and let Cæsar keep his kingdom of civil government ; let the State do its work and never interfere with the Church, and let the Church do her work and never interfere with, or be interfered with, by the State. The two kingdoms are separate and distinct. Broad lines of demarcation are always drawn, throughout the whole of the New Testament, between the spiritual and the temporal power, and the mischief is when men cannot see this. Christ is the head of the Church, not any one who represents the state. Brethren, just think for a minute what mischief this doctrine of the headship of the State has done. Time was when men could hardly be parish beadles, without coming to take the Sacrament at the Established Church. Oh! the multiplied hypocrisies which were perpetrated every day by graceless men who came to qualify themselves for office by taking the emblems of our holy faith when they knew not Christ! Such things are more or less inevitable to the system. Think, again, what persecutions have risen out of this error. You cannot put any sect into a position of ascendancy but it falls into persecution ; all sects have persecuted in turn when so tempted. It is in human nature to do ill when the civil arm is ready to crush conscience, and therefore Christ has taken the temptation out of the way, and put it out of the possibility of his people, if they keep close to his rule, so much as to touch the carnal weapon. The weapons of their warfare, he tells them, are not carnal but spiritual, and therefore mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

What a degradation to the Church of Christ to think of having any other head but Christ! I judge no one, God forbid I should ; but if I saw in this world a man absolutely perfect, full of divine knowledge and light, and I were asked by him, " Shall I assume that title?" I should go down on my knees and say, " For God's sake, and for your own soul's sake, touch it not, for how can you, with your light, and knowledge, and love to Christ, take from him one of his grandest names?"

The same rebuke is due to that which has been tolerated in many churches, namely, the headship of great religious teachers. Sometimes great teachers while yet alive have been practically regarded as the supreme arbiters of the Church. Their will was law, apart from the Book ; their decree stood fast, apart from

the Scripture. All this was evil. There are certain Churches at this day which reverence extremely the names of dead men. "The Fathers"—are they not by some thought to be as great as the Apostles? and the names of John Wesley, and John Calvin, and others, I fear very often occupy the place which belongs to Jesus Christ. Let every Church of Jesus Christ now declare that she follows not men but obeys her Master alone.

Mark you, brethren, the truth which I have brought out somewhat strongly equally applies to the Church itself, for the Church is not her own head, she has no right to act upon her own judgment, apart from the statutes of her King; she must come to the Book—everything is there for her. She has no right to use her own judgment apart from the Master. She must go to the Master. She is a servant, and the Master is supreme. The Church's power is twofold. It is a power to testify to the world what Christ has revealed. She is set as a witness, and she must act as such. She has, next, a ministerial power, by which she carried out the will of Christ, and doeth his bidding as Christ's servant and minister. A certain number of servants meet in the servants' hall; they have an order given to do such work, and they have also orders given them how to do it. They then consult with each other as to the minor details, how they can best observe the master's rule and do his bidding. They are perfectly right in so doing. But suppose they began to consult about whether the objects proposed by the master were good, or whether the rules which he had laid down might not be altered! They would at once become rebellious, and be in danger of discharge. So a church met together to consult how to carry out the Master's will, how to enforce his laws, does rightly; but a church meeting to make new laws, or a church meeting to rule according to its own judgment and opinion, imagining that its decision will have weight, has made a mistake, and placed itself in a false position. The one doctrine which I have sought to bring forward is this, that he alone who bought the church, and saved the church, is to rule the church; and surely our hearts, without exception, bow to this.

But if so, WHAT IS THE LESSON WHICH IT TEACHES TO EACH ONE HERE?

Does not it make each of you enquire, "If the entire Church is thus to yield obedience to Christ, and to no one else, am I

yielding such obedience? I claim to be a Christian, but am I a Christian of that prejudiced sort who follow that which they are brought up to, and so acknowledge the rules of mothers and fathers instead of the rule of Christ? Have I brought what I avow to be truth to the touchstone of Scripture? Did I ever spend a quarter of an hour in weighing my cherished opinions?" I am afraid the great mass of Christians have never done this, but have sucked in their religion with their mother's milk, and nothing further.

Again, if I be a Christian, am I in the habit of judging what I ought to do by my own whims and wishes, or do I judge by the Statute-book of the King? Many say they do not like this and do not like that, as if that had anything to do with it! What are your likes and dislikes? You are a servant, and bound to give up your own will to the Master. If Christ gives a command, which you imagine to be hard because it does not chime in with your love of ease—my brother, will you not, as a servant of the Master, put your whims aside and endeavour to follow him? Oh, it is a blessed life to lead, to be no longer the servant of men and of self, but to go to Christ daily in prayer, and say, "What I know not, teach thou me." Then you may laugh at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world, for the Master will never leave those who cleave to him. If a man loves the testimonies and commandments of the Most High, God shall be his buckler, his shield, and his high tower; but if he turns aside to his own imaginings, his fall shall be certain. The Lord keep the Church in this matter, and her day of victory shall soon come. May Christ be her only Head, and her triumph draweth near.

XVIII

"MY LORD AND MY GOD"

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God."—John 20: 27, 28.

WE ARE all of us apt to fall into a wrong state of heart, not because we are unconverted, nor yet because we are false to Christ, but simply because of our natural infirmity. So long as we are in this body, exposed to trial and temptation, we shall be prone to start aside like a broken bow. Thomas was a true-hearted follower of Jesus. He loved his Master. It had been a severe shock to his sensitive disposition and his thoughtful mind to see his Master betrayed, arraigned, scourged, crucified, dead, and buried. He could not at once rally from the agitation it caused him, or think it possible that Jesus could have risen from the dead. Pondering the matter scrupulously, it seemed to him to involve too great a miracle to be credited—far beyond anything to be expected. He would require, he said, very clear and satisfactory proofs before he would believe it.

In like manner, you and I have each of us our characteristic faults. We may not be too thoughtful, like Thomas; we may, perhaps, be too thoughtless, and that is quite as mischievous. Even our pleasing qualities which adorn us as virtues may become our temptations. The best point about us, as a sound judgment was in the case of Thomas, may become the very snare that entangles us. Let no man judge his fellow. Above all, let no man exalt himself. He that is in his best estate to-day may be in spiritual poverty to-morrow. He who rejoices in God and walks in holy consistency may, ere another sun has risen—few though the hours of interval be—have felt his feet slide from under him, and so fallen from his steadfastness as to have dishonoured his God, and pierced himself through with many sorrows.

LET THE MASTER FIRST ENGAGE OUR ATTENTION—THE MASTER IN THE PRESENCE OF AN UNBELIEVING DISCIPLE WHO HAS TREATED HIM WITH NO LITTLE PRESUMPTION AND RASHNESS.

How exquisitely touching his gentleness! Does he upbraid Thomas? Is there indignation in his tone? Is there petulance in his chiding? Does he exclaim, "How darest thou doubt that I am alive?" Or turns he upon him with some rough sentence, asking "Whence this impertinence that thou shouldest speak of putting thy finger into my wounds, and thrusting thy hand into my side? Unworthy servant, from this moment I disown thee for having spoken so disrespectfully of thy Lord and Master." No, far from it. He rather takes Thomas on his own ground; considers his infirmities, and meets them precisely as they are, without a single word of rebuke until the close, and even then he puts it very lovingly. The whole conversation was indeed a rebuke, but so veiled with love that Thomas could scarcely think it so. He speaks to him as if nothing had occurred to give any cause of offence, or by his presumption to occasion any estrangement.

Dwell for a moment on *the mercy which our Lord must have shown and the blessed patience he must have exercised*, to bear thus with Thomas. Ought he not to have known from the Old Testament that the Christ would rise from the dead? Had he not been reminded once and again by his Master of the prophecies which spoke concerning the death of Christ, and the glory that should follow? Had he not heard the Master himself frequently say that the third day he should rise again? He must have been present with the other Apostles when they turned his oracular sentences over in their minds, and said one to another, "What doth he mean by this, that he shall suffer and that he shall rise?" And had he not just before seen the women and conferred with the Apostles, who testified that they had found an empty tomb, that they had been told by angels that Jesus had risen—yea, more; that when they were sitting together Jesus had appeared in their midst? Yet, so strong was his unbelief, that he puts his own judgment against their assertion of fact, against the inspired Scriptures, against the thrilling words that fell from the Master's own lips, against the united, concurrent acknowledgment of all the brethren.

And think ye not, brethren, that our wilfulness is sometimes

as irrational and unwarranted as his? We harbour doubts in the teeth of accumulated evidences, and then credit ourselves with being wise and right, while we disparage all others as being foolish and wrong. The principle which lies at the root of all the heresies and the schisms that rend and divide the Church is just that self-confidence which will not let us yield, even though better men than ourselves—yea, though the united consent of the whole Church should bear testimony to a fact or a truth to which we demur. Through some lack of information or through some flaw of judgment, we judge differently from our companions; and forthwith our self-approbation is unyielding, and our conduct is intolerant. It was no small scandal thus to put his own self in opposition to the Master, in opposition to the Scripture, and in opposition to all his fellow-servants. Still our Lord Jesus Christ forbears to utter a word of denunciation. He just says, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." Softer words he could not have spoken. He responds without reproach. Such loving-kindness and tender mercy as David was wont to sing of old, did our blest Redeemer show.

Another ground for admiring our Lord's great patience with Thomas is *that he had dared to dictate the terms upon which he would believe*, and he had selected such terms as must have been most offensive had Jesus Christ been of a lofty, imperious, uncondescending spirit. Who is Thomas that he should put his hands into those wounds so lately healed; that side pierced by the soldier's spear? Is Thomas to make a road again to that sacred heart? Strange that he should have asked so mysterious a sign to strengthen his faith! What! was there no other way of believing in his Lord but that he must pass into the very wounds of that blessed body his finger and his hand? Ah! see how presumptuous the servant; see, also, how sympathising the Master! Was it not asking too much—far too much? Such a prayer ought not to have come from a disciple who had never forsaken his Master, much less from Thomas, who had fled with the rest, and had been absent when the Apostles had gathered together and seen the Master.

But yet Jesus is so forbearing towards him. I know not whether to wonder more at the impertinence of the servant, or

the clemency of the Master. Let us take the lesson to ourselves. Have we during the past week fallen into a signal state of gross unbelief? Have we been thinking hard thoughts of God? Has some sin suspended our communion with our Saviour? Are we now cold at heart and void of spiritual emotion? Do we feel quite unworthy to draw near unto him who loved us with so great a love? Be not desponding. The God of all patience will not desert you. The love which our Lord Jesus Christ bears to his people is so great that he passeth by their transgression, iniquity, and sin. No; there is no anger on his part to divide you from your Lord. Since he thus graciously comes to you, will you not gladly come to him? Do not think for a moment that he will frown or repulse you. He will not remind you of your cold prayers, your neglected closet, your unread Bible, nor will he chide you for losing occasions of fellowship; but he will receive you graciously and love you freely, and grant you just what at this moment you need.

While we are speaking of the Master, I should next like to call your attention to *the Master's great care*. He had been to see his disciples once; he had stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you"; he had given them their commission, had breathed upon them, and given them the Holy Ghost. But there was an absent one. Well, "what man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go and seek after that which has gone astray?" There was one away, and Jesus must come again. There must be the same salutation of peace; there must be the same blessing bestowed again, for Thomas must not be left out in the distribution of spiritual gifts. Thomas ought to have sought after Christ, especially after having been absent on the first occasion when he visited them. He surely ought to have said, "My Master came to me and I was not there; I will, therefore, seek him, be he where he may, and I will tell him how I regret that I should have missed the golden opportunity of his presence." But, beloved, Thomas did not seek his Master. Therein he was just like to us. It is preventing grace, brethren—it is grace that is beforehand with us—even with our faint desires, which comes to us from Jesus Christ.

Oh! how our Lord outruns us! Our sense of need is not so swift of foot as his perception of our need. Long before we

know we want him, he understands that we do require him, and he comes to us to bless us. It was for one he came, and for that one who did not seek him. He was found of one who sought him not. You might have thought that Thomas would have been as well left alone a little while. We should have said, "Well, if he be so obstinate as to lay down such conditions, let him cool a bit; let him just stop awhile in the cold till he is willing to come in at the door, and not to make conditions that he must come in at the window, or by some way of his own. So let him wait, for beggars ought not to be choosers, nor should impertinent disciples be tolerated." Yes, but Jesus will tolerate what we will not, and he will put up with us when we cannot put up with our brethren. We have not half so much to bear with from them as he has from us. Though Thomas might thus have been left, and deserved to have been left, yet Jesus came to him because he knew that his coming to him would be much better than letting him stop away. So, disciple, do not say to yourself, "I cannot come to the table. I do not feel fit; I shall not strive after fellowship with Christ; I do not feel as if my soul could enjoy it." Nay, but it will do you no good to stay away. Will you turn aside from the Master? Will you refuse the symbols of his death? Be not so rash and inconsiderate, I entreat you. Why should he not come to you? Before that bread is broken, you may have experienced a delightful change in the state of your heart, and with pleasing surprise you may be crying out, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Though we have already observed it, linger, I beseech you, upon *the Master's matchless condescension*. Behold the Lord of life, who had overcome the sharpness of death, and passed out of the portals of the tomb in triumph, having spoiled principalities and powers, and overthrown sin, death, and hell; the Son of God, at whose resurrection angels had attended, glad to wait as servants upon his royalty, that Lord—what think you? He must needs unrobe himself to gratify a disobedient, unbelieving disciple—yes, he must strip himself. 'Twere not enough to show his hands—that were kindness; but those hands must be touched, and those wounds themselves must be probed by a finger all too curious. It would have been profane, had it not been for the divine pity that allowed it. The way into his

heart must be revealed. Well, well, but he did it. Angels must have been shocked when they heard a man say, "I will not believe unless he bare his side to me"—still, he did it. Yes, just before he died, you will remember how he laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet. Now that he is risen from the dead, he is the same Christ; and if he condescended then to wash his disciples' feet, he will condescend now to bear with a disciple's ill-manners, and will even meet him in his infirmities. If they cannot be healed without a sight of his wounded person, he shall gaze upon his side again.

He will do anything for the love of his people. There is no kindness too costly for Christ to show. Now then, you who, while eagerly longing for his company, hide your face, and blush for very shame, do you say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; my heart is not worthy to receive thee as a guest"? True, you are not worthy; neither was Thomas. Yet you shall have his favour, and rejoice in the light of his countenance, if you sigh and cry for it. Doubtless you have been very far, during the week, from what you yourself wish you had been; nevertheless, "He will blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud." Your old friend may have passed you in the street and did not recognise you, because you are now so poor, but Jesus knows you. No one, peradventure, knows the privations you have had to put up with, poor Christian. You fancy you are despised and neglected by everybody—perhaps it may be your fancy, yet it is cutting to the heart even to think that your Christian brethren look down upon you. But Jesus never looks down contemptuously on his people. He condescends to stand on their platform, and put himself on a level with them with a sacred familiarity suited to their case. Full often he draws most near with most engaging smiles to those who are in saddest plight. This is how Jesus is wont to act.

Once more. *The Master's bounty* challenges our admiration and our confidence. When Thomas had received what he asked for, you might easily have conjectured that he would be put down in the second class of disciples. Instead of that, however, he was well commended in the Apostleship, and though not present when Jesus breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye

the Holy Ghost," yet on the Day of Pentecost Thomas received the same cloven tongue and the same power as the rest. Indeed, we have reason to believe that Thomas became as earnest an Apostle, as faithful a witness, and as blessed a martyr of the faith of Christ, as either Peter or James. The Master will not stint his goodness because we once and again betray our meanness. No, beloved; he will give us according to our ability to receive. If we are not able to receive to-day, he will enlarge our desires and expand our capacities, till to-morrow we may be able to receive from his fulness, and grace for grace. Come, then, ye hungry, starving souls, ye believers who are coming near to penury and spiritual bankruptcy, draw near in the spirit of love to Christ. Draw nigh in spirit and in truth to him, and your souls shall be enriched to your own profit and to the glory of God.

THE SERVANT. Thomas, struck with the Master's knowledge of what had been going on in his heart, and overwhelmed with the manifestation of the Master's presence and his power, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." These five words are full of meaning. Let me endeavour to interpret them to you. First, *they were an expression of faith*. Thomas now avows the faith which aforesaid he had disclaimed. "I will not believe," said he, "except—except—except—." Now he believes a great deal more than some of the other Apostles did; so he openly avows it. He was the first divine who ever taught the Deity of Christ from his wounds. Nor has every divine since then been able to see the Deity of Christ in his wounded humanity risen from the dead. This Thomas did. He declared the proper humanity of Christ when he touched him, and he declared his proper Deity when he avowed him to be both Lord and God. Thomas was slow in arriving at facts, but he had a comprehensive mind, and when he did arrive at a conviction he grasped it thoroughly in all its bearings. Peter would be impetuous, and leap to a result, but Thomas must consider the circumstances, weigh the testimony, try, judge, and prove the evidences before he acknowledged a truth. When his judgment did yield assent he was firm; there was no shaking; he understood the truth he adhered to better than others.

Delightful in the ear of Christ, my brethren, is the expression of our faith. Let none of us hesitate to go over in our minds our

avowal of faith in him "who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore." It well becomes us sometimes to perform what the Catholics call "acts of faith." I mean in holy contemplation and quiet meditation, to declare before the Lord that we believe in the facts that are made known to us, and the doctrines that have been delivered to us.

The short but expressive avowal of faith which Thomas made suggests to me this word of counsel. We should frequently make before God a declaration of our faith in the Deity of our Lord Christ, and in all the glories which surround his character. Let this be done vocally when you can—or otherwise mentally—for the exercise is profitable. But these words, "My Lord and my God," sound a little different to me from a simple avowal of faith. It was, as someone has said, *like the cry of a dove that at last had found its mate*. Poor Thomas. He doubted his Master, but he wanted him, and could not be happy without him. Now he has come flying back, and he has found him, and he seems to put his head, as it were, into the bosom of his Master, and to begin to weep and sigh like a poor child that has lost its mother in the streets of London, and, when it is brought back again, cannot say anything else but "My mother, and my mother, and my mother," and feels so happy to think it has found again the dear bosom on which to rest. So Thomas seems to say, "I have found thee, my Master, my Lord, and my God." He seems to humble himself, as though he would say, "How could I doubt thee? Where have I been? What have I been thinking of? What has my obstinate mind driven me to? What did I say? What did I ask? How could I be so impertinent? My Lord and my God! Thou hast forgiven it all, and in thy presence I seem to moan it out in those few words. Thy silly servant, thy foolish servant, but thou, my blessed Master, my condescending Master, my Lord and my God!"

Well now, beloved, there is something very sweet in this. Though I called it moaning, yet there is much music in it. Come now, you that have wandered, come and tell Christ at the table about it. Come and tell him that you are grieved, and that you are not so grieved as you ought to be. Tell him you are sorry that you should not have lived with him day by day. Your self-reproach may well be keen. Penitently bewail before him that you should have been so bewitched as to cleave to things below, and let

your God, your Saviour, go. Intense feeling commonly finds expression in few words. Silence is sometimes more thrilling than speech. "My Lord and my God" is the breathing of a contrite heart relieved in having found the grace it needs.

The ejaculation, however, "My Lord and my God," is the outcome of more than one emotion. If it involved a pang, it included an intense pleasure. Was it not a *joyous astonishment* which begot those words? It was so sweet to Thomas that he hardly thought his fellow-disciples would be able to appreciate so great a wonder. It was too much for himself, so he addresses himself to the Master, as if he alone, being the greatest marvel, could sympathise with him. "I marvel!" he seemed to say. "I could not have believed it. I saw the traitor kiss thy cheek. I saw thee dragged off with staves and lanterns to that lion's den. I saw thee when thou wast in Pilate's hall, tried and mocked. I saw thee when thou wast fastened to the tree; I stood there, and I saw thee bleed and die. I saw thy body taken down and wrapped in spices; and is it the same, the very same? Oh! yes; I recognise thee. I know those hands. I took those loaves from them when the thousands were fed in Galilee. I know that face; full many a time have I looked with beaming eye on that loving countenance of thine. I know that side; it is the same side I saw the soldier pierce, and I know it. It is the same; it is thyself, thyself, thyself, the risen Christ! Oh! wonder of wonders! I can say no less; I can say no more. 'My Lord and my God.'" Well now, holy wonder, beloved, is no mean kind of worship; it is, perhaps, no mean part of the worship of heaven.

Will it not be a surprise when we get there? Though, indeed, we shall see nothing in heaven but what we have been told of on earth, for it will be just such a heaven as God has told us of, yet we shall say that the half was not told us because we did not understand what we heard, and could not enter into the meaning of deep spiritual revelations. Oh! what astonishment might seize upon us now if we could really grip the thought, and I hope we shall! "Jesus hath loved, and lived, and died for me, and now he lives and pleads for me." Oh! believer, get to see Christ now with the optics of your mind; see him now exalted in the highest heavens, though once rejected of men, and as with astonishment you behold the ineffable splendour of that starry

throne, surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand of the chariots of God, and cohorts of messengers of fire, all waiting to obey his sovereign will ; as you see the Man whose head was once crowned with thorns, from the highest seat that heaven affords claiming eternal sovereignty, bow your head in devout astonishment, fall at his feet, and, giving tongue to your rapture, exclaim, "My Lord and my God."

And did not Thomas, by such an exclamation as this, *renew his personal affiance to Christ, and his positive consecration to his service?* "My Lord," saith he, "thou art, and I am thy servant ; my God, henceforth Thou art, and I am thy worshipper as long as I live." Beloved, years ago, some of us were first espoused to Christ spiritually. Fain would I remember those blessed hours when my young heart went out after him, and his blessed heart of love was revealed to me. We ought not to forget those times, for he does not forget them. He saith to Israel, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals." With what enthusiasm we sung:—

*" 'Tis done—the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to obey the voice Divine."*

Perhaps many years have passed over you since then, but whether they have been many or few, I am sure we have not been invariably true to those vows and resolutions ; our memory of him has not been equal to his mindfulness of us. Now, if the Lord should come to you afresh, and give you a choice season of fellowship with him, would it not be a most suitable response to give yourself up to him afresh? Should we not often do this? Would not the freshness of close fellowship be peculiarly suitable for the renewal of our covenant with our Lord, and of our consecration of ourselves to his service? On that night you were baptised, you could sing sincerely :

*" High heaven which heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."*

Oh! that God's Holy Spirit would enable you now to say in your soul, "Jesus, the despised of men, whom the great ones of this world know not, in whose blessed Person and redemptive work they will not believe, I take thee, my Master; I acknowledge thee to be my Lord; thy people shall be my people; thy God and Father shall be my God; thy blood shall be my confidence, and thy law my rule; thy love shall constrain my love; thy life shall be my example; thy glory shall be the one object for which I strive; thou, O Christ, art 'my Lord and my God.'" So shall your faith abound and all your graces flourish.

XIX

THE FORERUNNER

“Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.”—
Hebrews 6: 20.

THE Jewish high priest went within the veil once a year, and represented the people there, but he was never their forerunner, for no one followed him into the most holy place. His entrance within the veil did not admit another human being; and when he came forth, the veil again concealed even from him for another year, and from all others at all times, the secret glories of the most holy place, so that neither Aaron, nor any other high priest of his line, could ever be called a forerunner within the veil. This is one of the many instances in which our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Anti-type, far excels all the types. They do, as it were, represent the hem of his garment, but the glorious majesty and fulness of his high-priestly office, they are not able to set forth.

Moreover, this title of Forerunner is peculiar to the passage before us. The fact that Christ is the Forerunner of his people may be found, in other words, in the Scriptures, and again and again in this Epistle; but it is only here that we have the exact expression that Jesus Christ within the veil has gone to be the Forerunner of his people.

Now, what is peculiar and unique usually excites curiosity and attention; and if it be something peculiar and unique with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is himself peculiar and unique, we should look at it as closely as we can, and bend our whole minds and hearts to the consideration of it.

I am going to speak, first, upon THE NAME WHICH IS USED CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS THE FORERUNNER. Our Lord is sometimes spoken of as the Master, the Messiah, the Son of man, and so on; but here he is simply called Jesus. “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.”

I do not pretend to know why this title was selected, but at least it may be suggested that *Jesus is the name which his enemies despise*;—Jesus of Nazareth, “the Nazarene,” as his fiercest foes cry to this day. About the name Christ there is always a measure of respect, for even those who do not believe him to be *the* Christ, yet look for *a* Christ, a divinely-anointed One, a Messiah sent from God. But “Jesus” is the personal name of him who was born at Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, to whom the angel said before his birth, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS.” It is “the Nazarene” who is “the Forerunner, even Jesus,” and it is that name of Jesus that has caused his enemies to gnash their teeth, and speak and act against him, even as Paul confessed to king Agrippa, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” It is by that name which his enemies abhor that he is known within the veil. They speak of him there as the Saviour, the Joshua, the Jehovah-Jesus of his people; and by that name we know him as our Forerunner.

Moreover, Jesus is not only the name which is hated by his foes, but it is *the name which is dearest to his friends*. How charming is its very sound! You know how our hymn-writers have delighted to dwell upon it. Dr. Doddridge wrote,—

“Jesus, I love thy charming name,
 ’Tis music to mine ear;
 Fain would I sound it out so loud
 That earth and heaven should hear.”

And Charles Wesley sang,—

“Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
 That bids our sorrows cease;
 ’Tis music in the sinner’s ears,
 ’Tis life, and health, and peace.

“Jesus, the name high over all,
 In hell, or earth, or sky,
 Angels and men before it fall;
 And devils fear, and fly.”

Out of all our Saviour's names,—and they are all precious to us, and at certain times each one has its own peculiar charm,—there is not one which rings with such sweet music as this blessed name “Jesus.” I suppose the reason for this is that it answers to our own name, the name of sinner. That name needs, to cover it, the name of him who saves his people from their sins. The sound of this confession, “I have sinned,” is like that of a funeral knell; but the music of the sentence, “Jesus saves me,” is like that of a marriage peal; and, as long as I am a sinner, the name of Jesus will always be full of melody to my soul. To the Old Testament saints, it was comforting to read of him who was to be born, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” and we still delight to repeat those majestic sounds; but in our quiet and calm moments, and especially in times of despondency and depression of spirit, the music of the harp sounds most sweetly when this is the note which the minstrel evokes from it, “Jesus, *Jesus*, JESUS;” and it is very pleasant to me to think that this is the name that we shall remember best even in heaven.

Now I want to show you IN WHAT SENSE JESUS IS OUR FORERUNNER.

The word used here means a person running before, an out-runner, a herald, a guide, one who precedes. Such terms would correctly interpret the Greek word used here; so it means, first, *one who goes before to proclaim, or to declare*. A battle has been fought, and the victory won. A swift young man, out of the ranks of the victors, runs with all speed to the city, rushes through the gate, into the market-place, and proclaims to the assembled people the welcome news, “Our country is victorious; our commander is crowned with laurels.” That young man is the forerunner of the victorious host; the whole army will be back by-and-by, the conquering legions will come marching through the streets, and all eyes will gaze with admiration upon the returning heroes; but this is the first man to arrive from the field of conflict, to report the victory. In that sense Jesus Christ was the Forerunner to report in heaven his own great victory. He did much more than that, as you well know, for he fought the fight alone, and of the people there were none with him; but he was the first to report in heaven his own

victory. On the cross he had met Satan and all the powers of darkness, and there had he fought and overcome them, and shouted the victor's cry, "It is finished."

Who shall report that victory in heaven? Shall some swift-winged angel, one of the many that had hovered round the cross and wondered what it all could mean, fly like a flame of fire, and pass through the gates of pearl, and say, "He has done it"? No, Jesus must himself be the first to proclaim his own victory, and the eternal safety of all for whom he died. They tell out this good news through the streets of heaven to this day, but he it was who first certified it. When he ascended upon high leading captivity captive, when he entered within the veil, and stood before his Father, the First-begotten from the dead, when he declared by his majestic presence that all was finished, when he proclaimed the justification of all his elect, in that proclamation, he was our Forerunner, the first to proclaim that glorious truth, "It is finished."

A second meaning of the word forerunner will be found in the sense of possessing, for Christ has gone to heaven not merely to proclaim that his people are saved, but *to possess heaven on their behalf*. Representatively, he has taken possession of the heavenly places in the name of those for whom he died. Christ had paid the purchase-price of our eternal inheritance; we as yet have not entered upon possession of it, but he has, and he has taken possession of it in our names. All the elect are summed up in him who is their Covenant Head; and he being there, they are all there in him. As the burgesses of a town sit in the House of Commons represented by their member, so we sit in the heavenly places represented by our Leader, who sits there in our name. He has taken seizin, as they used to say of old, taken possession of all the glory of heaven in the name of his people. Why is heaven mine to-night? Because it is his, and all that is his is mine. Why is eternal life yours, beloved? Why, because "your life is hid with Christ in God," and he has in heaven for you eternal life, and all its accompaniments of joy and blessedness, and he is sitting there enjoying them because they are his and yours. You are one with him, so he is your Forerunner in that sense.

Christ is also *our Forerunner in the sense of preceding us*. The Forerunner goes first, and others must come afterwards; he is

not a forerunner if there are not some to run behind him. When John the Baptist came, he was the forerunner of Christ; if Christ had not come after him, John the Baptist would have come for nothing. As Jesus is the Forerunner to heaven, rest assured that those for whom he is the Forerunner will in due time follow him there. The best pledge of the glories of the saints in heaven is the glory of Christ there. The surest proof that they shall be there is that HE is there, for where he is there must also his people be. I delight to think of Jesus Christ as our Forerunner, because I feel sure that the mighty grace, which wrought so effectually in him, and made him run before, will also work in all his people, and make them run behind till they enter into the selfsame rest that he now enjoys.

And once again, Christ is our Forerunner within the veil in the sense that *he has gone there to prepare a place for us*. I do not know what was needed to make heaven ready for us; but whatever was needed once is not needed now, for heaven has been ready for us ever since Christ went to prepare it. We have sometimes arrived at a house when we were not expected; our friends have been glad to see us, but we could hear the bustle of preparations, and we almost wished that we had not gone to put them into such a flutter in getting ready for us. But no unexpected guest shall ever arrive at heaven's gate. They are watching and waiting for us; they know just when we shall get there, and Christ had gone to make everything ready for his long-expected and greatly-loved ones. "I go to prepare a place for you," said Christ to his disciples; and that place he has prepared. We have not to go into an undiscovered country; for, however glorious the new world might be, the first man to enter it would tread its soil with trembling feet, for he would not know what he might find there. It was a brave thing to be a Columbus to discover a new world, but it is a happier thing to go to a country that has been discovered many hundreds of years, where civilization has provided for the supply of all our needs.

Now I want to answer this question,—INTO WHAT IS CHRIST OUR FORERUNNER? He is our Forerunner within the veil; where is that?

Well, first, *it is where all our hope is fixed*. Our hope is fixed on things invisible, mysterious, spiritual, sublime, immutable,

divine, which are where Christ is. Paul tells us that the anchor of our soul is "within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

Within the veil is, also, *the place of the greatest possible nearness to God*. Under the old dispensation, it was an awfully solemn thing for a man to be allowed to enter within the veil; anyone who ventured in there uncalled would have been instantly destroyed. To stand within the veil was a joyous, blissful privilege, yet it involved enormous responsibility; but you and I, beloved, stand there in the closest possible nearness to God because Christ has gone there as our Forerunner; he is not merely our Forerunner so that we may enter there in twenty or thirty years' time, or whenever we die, but that we may now boldly enter into the heavenlies where he has gone. Where he is, we are bound to go. Well then, as Christ is there, at his Father's side, "The Man of love, the Crucified" let us not fear to enter where we have the right to go.

It is very sad that, when some of us pray, we do not dare to enter within the veil; even the outer court seems to be too holy a place for us; if we do venture into the court of the priest, we are all in a tremble. But, brethren, we are permitted to enter into that which is within the veil, for Jesus is there, and he bids us come to him; therefore let us come boldly. There is a measure of holy familiarity which the devout man may enjoy in the presence of God. It is a blessed privilege to know God as your Father, and to be as bold with him as a child is with a father, with the boldness of a love which does not dare because it deserves but dares because God loves; and which, while it humbles itself into the very dust, yet grasps the feet of God even there, and clings to him, and delights in its nearness to him.

Let us also remember that this place of nearness to God, into which Christ has gone, will mean *nearness to God in a higher sense by-and-by*. You cannot conceive of anybody being nearer to God than Christ is "within the veil." In that nearness he is our Forerunner if we are truly in him by faith; is not that a wonderful thought? We might have thought that, in that wondrous nearness to God which the Mediator enjoys, he would be alone, for he is so very near, but it is not so. He has himself said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in

my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is not only true that we are to behold Christ's glory, but even while on earth he said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory;"—as if they would never fully see that glory till they were with him where he is. To whatever heights of glory he has gone, to whatever raptures of joy he has ascended, he has gone there as the Forerunner of his people.

Let us each one endeavour by faith to realize our nearness with Christ. He has entered within the veil, but he has entered as our Forerunner. Remember that, although you are imperfect, feeble, sorrowing, yet you are one with Jesus Christ. You believe that as a doctrine, but I want you to realize it now as a fact. If you had a rich friend who had given you an equal share with himself of all that he possessed, even if you had not entered upon the possession of it, you would think, "I have not to depend upon charity for my daily bread, for my rich friend has made me as rich as he is himself." Now, whatever joy that might give you, it ought to give you far more to think that you are one with Christ, and that Christ is one with you. When you suffer, Christ is suffering in one of the members of his mystical body; and when he rejoices, it is his desire that his joy may be in you, that your joy may be full. He has married you, and he means you to take his riches as well as himself, and to reckon that all he is and all he has is yours. If the Holy Ghost would cause you to realize this, it would make your soul leap within you, and bless the Lord, and magnify his holy name. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" nay, more, I am a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Our interests are one, for we are one; and Christ up there, in the heavenlies, is but myself there, for I am in him, and I shall soon be actually and literally where he is, as I now am in the person of him who is there as my Representative and Forerunner.

That is the first practical thought, and the second is this,—*is he your Forerunner, beloved? Then, run after him.* There can be no forerunner, as I have said before, unless somebody follows. Jesus is our Forerunner, so let us be his after-runners. "Ah!" says one, "but he is so different from us." The beauty of it is that he is *not* different from us, for he was a man like ourselves.

"Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Though in him was no sin, yet in all other respects he was just such as we are; and it cost him as much to run as it will cost us to run; yea, more, for his race was more arduous than ours is. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" therefore "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Your road may be full of crosses, but they are not such crosses as the one he carried. You have suffered bereavements; yes, and "Jesus wept." You have to endure poverty; and he had not where to lay his head. You are often despised, and he is still "despised and rejected of men." You are slandered; but as they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, what wonder is it that they speak ill of those who are the members of his household? Jesus Christ ran the very race that you have to run, and he ran it perfectly; and that same power which wrought in him to run until he entered within the veil, and so passed the goal, will help you to run till you reach the same spot. If he is your Forerunner, and he has run the race, it is essential that you should run it too, and should also win the prize.

Courage, brethren; nothing is too hard for our poor manhood to accomplish through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit. As Christ has conquered, so can we. Sin's assaults can be repelled, for Christ repelled them. The Holy Ghost can lift up "poor human nature"—as we call it,—into something nobler and better, transforming it into the likeness of the human nature of the Christ of God, till in that human nature purity and holiness even to perfection shall dwell. Follow, brethren and sisters, the mighty Runner who has gone before you within the veil, and the best way to follow him is to put your feet into his footprints. It may seem as if you might get to the goal either this way or that, but the best Christian is he who does not wish for any other path than that which his Master trod. I would like—oh, that I might realize it!—to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;" not to say, "This is not essential, and that might be dispensed with," but, like the Master himself, to say, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The next thing I have to say is this, *let us love our Lord intensely*. He has gone to heaven, but he has not gone there for

himself alone. He has got so into the habit of sharing with his people all that he has that he has not left off that habit now that he has got into the glory; he says, "I am here for my people; I was on the cross for them, and I am on the throne for them." It is marvellous that even the reward that is given to him he shares with his own beloved ones, for there is nothing that he has that he keeps to himself. It was a blessed marriage day for us, his people, when he took us to be his; for with all his heavenly gifts he did us endow, and now he has nothing but what he holds in common with his people. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Then, must we not love much him who has loved us so much that he has given us himself and all he has? Come, my cold heart, if there is anything that can warm thee, surely it is the thought of such true, fond, constant, faithful love as this.

Last of all, *since Christ has gone to heaven to be our Forerunner, let us trust him.* We could have trusted him, I hope, while he was running his race; so, surely, we can trust him now that he has won it. The saints of God, who lived before Christ came to dwell upon the earth, trusted him before he started to run; his Apostles and other disciples in their poor feeble way trusted him while he was running; so shall not we trust him now that the race is finished, and he has gone into the glory on our behalf? If a man says, "I will do a thing," if he is a truthful man, and he can do what he says, we depend upon him; but when he has done it, it would be a shame not to depend upon him. If Christ came here to-night, never having died, and he said to us, "Ye poor lost ones, I mean to save you," ought we not to believe him? If he said, "Dear children of mine, I mean to come and run a race, and win it for you," would we not say, "Lord Jesus, we trust thee"? Well, he is not here in bodily presence; he is up yonder. Do you not see him with the crown upon his head? There he sits in glory; innumerable angels are bowing before him, and cherubim and seraphim are praising him day without night, and the redeemed from among men are singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us." Can you not trust him, sinner? "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" can you not trust him? The dying thief trusted him when his hands were nailed to the cross; can

we not trust him now that his hand grasps the sceptre of sovereignty? Surely we must. Jesus, Master, if we never have relied upon thee before, grant us the grace to do so now; and as for those of us who have depended on thee, these many years, thou dear, tried, precious, faithful Lover of our souls, surely we have done with doubting. We are in thy bosom; nay, more, we are inside thy very heart, and therefore we must be safe. Who can harm us there? Thou didst say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." With this assurance let us go our way, resolving to follow our fore-runner till we get where he is, "within the veil," and then for ever to follow him "whithersoever he goeth."

XX

ALPHA AND OMEGA

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."—Revelation 22: 13.

EVERY Sunday-school child knows that there is no great mystery hidden in the words "Alpha and Omega." We have here the names of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, so that the sense would be, "I am A and great O," in the Greek, or in plain English, "I am A and Z." "Jesus is the Alpha and Omega—A and Z—the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Our text demands no preface; indeed, I do not know how I could venture to put a single letter before Alpha. Let us therefore come to our subject at once.

At the outset, WE SHALL BRING CERTAIN TRUTHS TO THE TEXT.

This is a much too common method of preaching, and one which I am very far from admiring as a custom. When some preachers get a text, the enquiry is not what truth is in the passage, but what sense shall they thrust upon it? Full often the poor text is served as a cook treats a bird; it is first killed, and then stuffed with any kind of fancies that the preacher may have chopped up ready to hand. By frankly stating that my first observations are not in the verse before us, I shall avoid sanctioning such methods of abusing God's Word. The thoughts to which I now give utterance, have been suggested by divers commentators, and certainly, if they be not the legitimate offspring of the text are closely connected with it.

1. Of things which we may fairly bring to the text, let us notice first, that *our Lord may well be described as the Alpha and Omega in the sense of rank*. He is *Alpha, the first*, the chief, the foremost, the first born of every creature, the Eternal God. Man by nature is not the first even among creatures, for angels excel him far; nor are angels the chief, for our glorious Lord

infinitely transcends them. He who made is greater than they who are made ; and he who sends is greater than those who are sent. Jesus Christ stands Alpha in honourable degree ; no angel can vie with him. " Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." " For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? . . . And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." As for the Son, he hath appointed him heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, but of the angels it is asked—" Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? "

Alpha was frequently used by the Hebrews to signify the best, just as we are accustomed to use the letter A. We say of a ship, for instance, that it is " A 1." So Jesus Christ may truly be said to be the Alpha, the first in this sense. Call him by whatever title Scripture has affixed to him, and he is the first in it. Is he a prophet? Then all the prophets follow at a humble distance, bearing witness of him. Is he a priest? Then he is the Great High Priest of our profession ; he is the fulfilment of all that which the priest did but typically set forth. Let him mount his throne as king, then he is King of kings, and Lord of lords ; " his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." If he be the builder of his Church, he is the wise Master-builder ; if a shepherd, he is the Great Shepherd who shall appear ; if the corner-stone, he is the chief corner-stone—in fact, it mattereth not what title, of which character he beareth, he is in all these respects the Alpha, as much surpassing all things that may be compared to him, as the sun excelleth the stars, or as the sea exceedeth the drops of the dew.

But, beloved, though our blessed Lord is thus Alpha—the first—he was once in his condescension made *Omega, the last*. How shall I describe the mighty descent of the Great Saviour. Down from the loftiness of his Father's glory, and from the grandeur of his own divine estate, he stooped to become man. There is a vast distance from the Alpha of Deity, down to that letter which stands for manhood ; but to this he came, he was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death.

But this is not enough ; he stoops lower than man, yea, there is a verse in which he seems to put himself on a level with the least of all creatures that have life—he says, “I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” His Father forsook him ; the wrath of heaven rolled over him. He was so utterly crushed and broken, that he was poured out like water, and brought into the dust of death. Marshal the creatures of God in their order, in the dread day when Jesus hangs upon the cross, and you must put him for misery, for weakness, for shame as the last, the Omega. How marvellous is this tremendous sweep of his humiliation, that from the highest throne in glory he should descend into the lowest depths of the tomb. Death bringeth the creature to its very lowest degradation, and maketh it as though it were nought. Jesus died, and as I see the incorruptible body lying in Joseph’s sepulchre, I can but marvel that ever the great Alpha should come so low as to yield up the ghost, being subjugated beneath the power of the last adversary.

Now, this is not in the text, but it may be fairly brought to it I think, and, without any compulsion, it may shake hands with the passage as being near of kin to it.

2. We will make another observation which is not in the text, but which is still a very precious truth, namely, that Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega *in the book of holy Scripture*. Open the first page, and a discerning eye will see Jesus Christ in Genesis. We know that the worlds were made by him, and as we hear that majestic sentence, “Let *us* make man in our own image after *our* likeness,” we at once discern him as one of the sacred Trinity. We go onward to the fall, and at the gates of Eden the promise of the woman’s seed consoles us ; we advance to the days of Noah, and lo, we see the Saviour typified in the ark, which bears a chosen company out of the old world of death into the new world of life ; we walk with Abraham, as he sees Messiah’s day ; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise ; we leave the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh on his deathbed ; we see his seed brought out of Egypt, and eating the Lamb of God’s passover ; we reach the age of the law, and here the types crowd in upon us ; but time permits not even a glance—suffice it to say, in brief, that we view the face of Jesus in almost every page, and behold his character painted to the life in nearly every book.

Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way—they all stand as the cherubs did, over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great propitiation.

In the New Testament we find our lord the one constant theme of every page. It is not an ingot here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered, but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold, for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified. What would be left of the evangelists if you could remove Christ from them? What are Paul's Epistles if Jesus be taken away? The whole of the Pauline literature sinks in a moment if Jesus be withdrawn. And what have Peter, James, Jude, or John to write upon but the same subject? Is it not Jesus still? Do not shut the book too hastily, for see its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer's name. "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Brethren, we should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the Word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; and, then, we looking into it see his face reflected as in a glass—darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing him as we shall see him face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ's letters to us, perfumed by his love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the golden chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child, Jesus; unroll them and you find your Saviour. Talk not to us of bodies of divinity—the only body of divinity is the person of Christ. As for theology, Christ is the true theology—the incarnate Word of God; and if you can comprehend him you have grasped all truth. He is made unto us wisdom; getting him you have the wisdom of the Scriptures. The quintessence of the Word of God in Christ. Distil the book—and reach its essential quality, and you have discovered Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the King of the Jews.

3. Another fact is also sweetly true, although not perhaps in our text. Jesus Christ is *the Alpha and Omega of the great law of God*. Brethren, the law of God finds not a single letter in human

nature to meet its demands. You and I are neither Alpha nor Omega to the law, for we have broken it altogether. We have not even learned its first letter—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and certain I am we know but very little of the next—"thy neighbour as thyself." Even though renewed by grace, we are very slow to learn the holiness and spirituality of the law; we are so staggered by the letter that we often miss its spirit altogether. But, beloved, if you would see the law fulfilled, look to the person of our blessed Lord and Master. What love to God is there! O brethren, where shall we find anything to be compared to it? "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me." What love to man you find in him. Talk not of the good Samaritan; here is one who is better than he; the Samaritan did but give his wine and his oil, and his two-pence, but Jesus gives himself—gives his heart's blood instead of wine, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit instead of oil, while for food he gives his own flesh and blood for poor humanity to feed upon. Jesus loved in such a way that all the love that ever gleamed in human bosom, if it could be gathered together, would be but as a spark, while his great love to man would be as a flaming furnace heated seven times hotter than human imagination can conceive. Do not, beloved friends, if you are in Christ Jesus, permit legal fears to distress you at the remembrance of your failures in obedience, as though they would destroy your soul. Seek after holiness, but never make holiness your trust. Seek after virtue, pant for it; but when you see your own imperfections, do not therefore despair. Your saving righteousness is the righteousness of Christ; that in which God accepts you is Christ's perfect obedience; and we say of that again, in the words of the text, Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

Now we will take the text itself, and show what are THE TRUTHS WHICH WE ASSUREDLY BELIEVE TO BE IN IT.

1. Our Lord Jesus is Alpha and Omega in the *great alphabet of being*. Reckon existences in their order, and you begin—"In the beginning was the Word." Proceed to the conclusion, suppose that all the universe has melted like the hoar-frost of the morning—imagine that all worlds are extinguished as the sparks

from the forge—conceive that, as a painted bubble passes away for ever, so the whole creation has departed—What then? What is the Omega? Why assuredly Jesus Christ would still be “God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.” This we are quite sure is in the text, because the expression “Alpha and Omega” is only used four times, and on the second occasion we find it in the eleventh verse of the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation, in a connection which leads us to conclude that it must relate to the eternity and self-existence of our Lord; for the seventeenth verse explains the eleventh thus, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Those expressions manifestly refer to the eternity of Christ; to his self-existence, his having life in himself; to the fact that death did by no means destroy his self-existence, and that now since his resurrection he liveth for evermore, death hath no more dominion over him. Beloved, this is a great theme. When we begin to talk of the eternity of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are overwhelmed by the glory of our subject. We need the eagle eye and the eagle wing of John to see and soar into heavenly things.

Will you go back six thousand years, when the world has newly emerged from darkness, will you fly on, if you can, through all the ages of the geological periods, if such there were. Can you journey back millions of years? Can you, can you, can you reach in spirit the time when as yet cherubim were not born, when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by song of seraph, when the unnavigated ether had never been stirred by the wing of angel? There is no world, no sun, no stars; space alone exists. Can you go further back till space is gone? You cannot. It is impossible; you are lost; for you can only think of space and time. But if you could by any stretch of imagination multiply the millions of years of which we dreamed just now, by another million times, and that a million million million times more, and those on still as far as ever human arithmetic can go, and beyond the possibilities of angelic computation, yet even then you have not begun to fathom the eternity in which God hath dwelt alone. Certainly there was an age in which God was dwelling alone, not in solitude, for, as the fathers

very rightly say, you must not use the term "solitude" in reference to God, since the three Divine Persons everlastingly delighted in each other, and so knew no solitude—yet there was and is an aloneness in our God, since he is before all things. Can your thoughts attain to that age of God in lonely glory: in that eternity we know that Jesus was. He, whom though we have not seen his face, unceasingly we do adore, was then the eternal Son. The Word was God. Jesus was Alpha. To fly as far in the other direction, when the little river of time shall have been absorbed into the deep ocean of eternity, when all the world shall have departed even as the motes which dance in the sunbeam are seen no more when the sunbeam is gone; yet still Jesus shall be the Omega.

2. Another truth is most certainly in the text, namely, that *Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the alphabet of creating operations*. Who was it that began to make? Not an angel, for the angel must first be made. Did matter create itself? Was there an effect without a cause? It is contrary to our experience and our reason to believe any such thing. The first cause stands first, and the first cause is God in the divine Trinity, the Son being one Person of that Trinity. He is Alpha because his hand first of all winged angelic spirit, and made his ministers a flame of fire. He first made all things out of nothing. He moulded the clay from which man was made; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. As he alone began, so his power maintains the fabric of creation; all things consist by him. Christ is the great iron pillar of the universe, and the creatures twine about him as the vine doth about its prop. These things are not, they vanish like a dream if Jesus withdraw his power. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.

Brethren, there may be creations going on at the present moment; fresh globes may even now be fashioned between the hands of Omnipotence, if so; in every one of these Immanuel hath a share. At this very moment new comets may be launched like thunderbolts upon their fiery way, but not without the Son of God. Human souls issue from the womb of creation every hour, but in their sustenance and sending forth the mighty God is ever present. Oh, on, on, as the works of God shall be enlarged and extended, as the universe shall grow on every side,

Christ shall be there still; his Father's delight, with whom he taketh counsel—his equal, bearing with him the name of Alpha and Omega.

3. So again, beyond a doubt, our text intends that Christ is Alpha and Omega *in all covenant transactions*. Beloved, here is a theme worthy of many discourses from the most eminent divines. The thoughts of God, the eternal decrees, the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah; these are deep things; but we know this concerning them, that from first to last they all have a relation to Christ. Concerning our race and the elect out of it, the whole matter is encompassed in the person of the Redeemer. Speak ye of election? "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," is Christ's name. We are chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. Speak of our being predestinated to be sons—we are only made so in him who stands as the elder brother. Every separate individual of the chosen tribe stands only by virtue of an union which was established from of old between his person and the person of the Redeemer. Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the well-spring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one object was always aimed at—the glory of the Son of God.

The Father begins with exalting Jesus, and concludes with glorifying him with the glory which he had with him before the world was. How I do love the doctrines of grace when they are taken in connection with Christ. Some people preach the Calvinistic points without Jesus; but what hard, dry, marrowless preaching it is. The letter killeth; it breedeth in men a controversial, quarrelsome spirit; but when you preach the doctrines of grace as they are in Christ, as Dr. Hawker would have preached them, when you talk of them as Rutherford would have talked of them, oh, then, a holy unction rests upon them, and they become inestimably precious; and let every believer remember he does not get these doctrines as he should get them, unless he receives them in Christ. Everywhere the Lord Jesus

is to be considered not as the friend of a day, or our Saviour only in his life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. By faith I see him as the eternal Son of God ; I see him standing in the purpose of the Father as the covenant head of the elect. I see him in due time born of a woman, but I do not forget that his goings forth are of old from everlasting, and that before the day-star knew its place his delights were with the sons of men. I see him ; he cries "It is finished !" he bows his head. I do not, however, forget that he is not dead, but that when the world shall die and time shall conclude its reign, then he who is the Ancient of days shall live, and shall flourish in immortal youth. Alpha and Omega is Jesus Christ, then, in the eternal purposes and in the covenant transactions of God.

4. Jesus Christ is certainly Alpha and Omega *in all salvation-work as it becomes apparent in act and deed*. That this is the meaning of the text I am clear, because in the first passage where the Alpha and Omega occurs—namely, in the first chapter of the Revelation, eighth verse—you will see that all the works of salvation are ascribed to our Lord. Read the fifth verse, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him . . . I am Alpha and Omega." Now, we have here a summary of the great transactions of saving grace. You have here that *he loved us*—loved us before the world was, with an everlasting love ; you have next, that *he washed us* from our sins in his own blood, in which you have his redemption, and our consequent pardon, justification, and sanctification, all of which come to us through him. As for our glory, it is the result of his second advent, therefore, "Behold, he cometh," makes him the Omega, as the "Unto him that loved us," made him the Alpha. I need not repeat to you who know so well that "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved," and that in no part or portion of that salvation can any other name be admitted into partnership with his. Jesus must begin. Jesus must conclude.

It is very striking to observe the commencement and the perfection of the spiritual life both laid at Jesus' door in the sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." So then, if you have any thirst, you must come to Jesus Christ at the beginning, to get the water of life. If you have been led to know your own emptiness—if you have received from his Spirit a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, go not to the law; look not within; but come to the Alpha, drink and be satisfied. If, on the other hand, life is near its close; if you have been preserved in holiness; if you have been kept in righteousness, remember still to trust in the Omega; for these words follow, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." So that the inheriting of all things, the final overcoming of all spiritual foes, comes through Jesus, just as did the first drink of living water.

5. There is one more truth which I conceive to be in the text. Jesus is Alpha and Omega, not only in the individual salvation of every saint, but *in the whole chain of the Church's history*. Where shall I say that the Church began? Why, very speedily after there was a seed of the serpent, there was also a seed of the woman. Surely the line of demarcation began hard by the gates of Eden; there we see Abel worshipping God in faith, and Cain who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. Do we not thus early see in Abel's sacrifice the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Follow the Church through all her varied fortunes, and you will find her always bearing the banner of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah at her fore-front. No matter if she wanders about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, Christ is still the day-star of her comfort. In her victories, his name is the loudest note; others may have slain their thousands, but the Son of David his ten thousands. No name wakes up the minstrelsy of Israel like the name of Messiah, the coming one. Nothing can move the feet of Zion's maidens so joyously in the sacred dance; nothing can make the daughters of Jerusalem smite their timbrels to a more joyful strain than this—"He cometh; he cometh who shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with truth."

Since the first advent of our Lord, has not the Church ever

carried Jesus as her standard. Where will you find the Church without Christ? Jesus is yonder, among the snowy mountains of Switzerland, and his Church is with him though her sons bear the approbrious names of heretics, schismatics, traitors, and worse. The Church of Rome had forgotten her first husband, and played the harlot, committing fornication with the kings of the earth; but there was a faithful bride found for the Son among the Albigenses and the Waldenses, in whose homes Jesus dwelt. What was their battle cry?—what the note they chanted round the family hearth?—what the name they pressed to their bosom when they dare not sing for fear the foe should fall upon them? Was it not the name of Jesus? And when the dark ages passed away, what light do I see gleaming yonder? What doth Luther proclaim? What does Calvin teach? It is the great name of Jesus which is their common theme. What say you, brothers and sisters? do you not join hands in solemn covenant, and say today, "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be remembered as long as the sun." Do you not long for the time when "all nations shall be blessed in him, all people shall call him blessed?" Surely you yourselves will help to fulfil the promise, "one generation shall praise his name to another, and shall declare his mighty acts."

But the end cometh; Jehovah's banner will soon be furled; his sword shall be sheathed for ever; the unsuffering kingdom shall be proclaimed; swords shall be broken, and spears shall be snapped; the sun shall look upon no battlefield, but shall greet the reign of universal peace. What then? Jesus' name shall then be known everywhere, men shall talk of him and think of him by day and by night. Prayer, also, shall be made for him continually, and daily shall be he praised. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Then cometh the end. The judgment throne is set. The wicked are summoned. The righteous on the right hand have received their rewards—from whose hand? From the hand of the Omega who closes the chapter with his benediction, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Here are the wicked; hell is gaping for them; the tongues of flames lick up the multitudes as the lion devoureth his prey. Who is this that pronounces the thundering sentence, "Depart, ye cursed?" It is the

Omega. That same face which once was bedewed with tears, is now brighter than the sun with flashes of lightning; the voice which said, "Come to me, ye weary," now saith, "Depart, ye cursed." He began—he ends—the Alpha is the Omega. But it is an end without end. Long, long through the ages of eternity, amid heaven's perfect inhabitants, his name shall be the perpetual theme of song.

By your patience we will notice A FEW THINGS WHICH FLOW OUT OF THE TEXT.

I. The first is this—Sinner, saint, *let Jesus be Alpha and Omega to thee today in thy trust.* Poor soul, art thou willing to be saved? But dost thou say, "I have not this qualification, or that recommendation?" Ah, do not begin with thyself as the Alpha. Come to Jesus as you are, and let him be Alpha to you. Are you black? Let him wash you. Is your heart hard? Let him soften it. Are you a dead good-for-nothing soul? Are you ragged and wretched? Are you lost, ruined, and undone; do not stop to write Alpha first; do not stop to begin your own salvation. Sinner, remember there is no preparation wanted for Christ. Just lean upon him wholly. Take him to begin with—nay let him take thee to begin with. Drop into his arms now, repose upon him *now*, you will never get the true salvation unless the first letter in it be Christ, for he is the Alpha. It will all have to be begun over again if you begin with humblings, with repentings, with convictions, or with anything but Christ; it must all be done over again, I say, unless you begin with Jesus. There he is. His wounds are flowing, his heart is breaking, his soul is in anguish—there is the Alpha of your salvation. Look and live. "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." Child of God, let him be the Omega of your salvation. If you have begun with him, do not now confide in yourself. Shall I say to you as Paul did to the Galatians, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him." Your first hope was through looking to Jesus, will you now look to your sanctifications, to your prayings, to your evidences, to your humblings, to your communings. Away with all these, if they pretend to be the ground of your soul's comfort. Remember, child of God, that to the end of the chapter it must be as it was in the beginning—

*"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."*

2. Beloved, if we have trusted him, *let him be Alpha and Omega in our love*. Oh, give him the first place in your love, young woman; may the Holy Ghost win thy young heart for my Lord and Saviour. Let the flower of thy heart be offered to him in the bud. O you, young children, who are your mother's delight, and your father's care, I pray that your first dawning days may be consecrated to the Saviour; let him be Alpha with you. You who are growing old and grey-headed, let him have the Omega of your love. As you lean upon your staff, bending downward as if to salute your graves, bear loving recollection of all the years of his patience, and the days of his faithfulness to you. Breathe the prayer "Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not."

3. But, surely, brethren, our Lord should be the Alpha and Omega of our life's end and aim. What is there worth living for but Christ? Oh, what is there in the whole earth that is worth a thought but Jesus? Well did an old writer say, "If God be the only Eternal, then all the rest is but a puff of smoke, and shall I live to heap up puffs of smoke, and shall I toil and moil merely to aggrandize myself with smoky treasures that the wind of death shall dissipate for ever?" No, beloved, let us live for eternal things, and what is there of eternal things that can be chosen but our Lord? O let us give him next year the Alpha of our labour. Let us begin the year by working in his vineyard, toiling in his harvest field. This year is almost over. There is another day or two left—let us serve him till the year is ended, going forward with double haste because the days are now so few. "Lord teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

4. Lastly, Jesus crucified should be the Alpha and Omega of all our preaching and teaching. Woe to the man who makes anything else the main subject of his ministry. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Do not tell me you preach sound doctrine, you preach rotten doctrine, if you do not preach Christ—preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but sin. Preach Christ; lift him up

high on the pole of the Gospel, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and you will accomplish your life's end, but preach orthodoxy, or any form of doxy; if you have left out Christ, there is no manna from heaven, no water from the rock, no refuge from the storm, no healing for the sick, no life for the dead. If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night, you have left the waters out of the sea, and the floods out of the river, you have left the harvest out of the year, the soul out of the body, you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed *all* of its all. There is no gospel worth thinking of, much less worth proclaiming in Jehovah's name, if Jesus be forgotten.

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